

December 2024

Volume 3, Issue 11

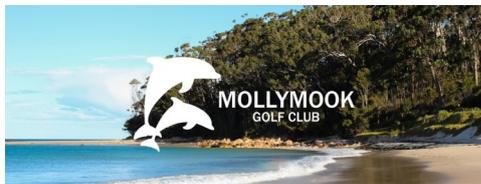
All content is created for information only and is not legal advice, and not necessarily the views of the AMC. It is edited by Lou Szymkow and whilst all care is taken, the editor cannot guarantee the accuracy of information. The editor, guest contributors & guest speakers all volunteer their time for Celebrants.



Beauty surrounds us, sometimes we just need to take a breath to observe & absorb it.

An update from your AMC South Coast Coordinator, Lou Szymkow

To achieve success, we will continue to grow, and do what we can to help each other grow.



You are invited to our last face to face meeting for 2024
Mollymook Golf Club
Sunday 8th December 2024
72 Golf Avenue,
Mollymook NSW 2539
Phone (02) 4455 1911

Bistro or Menu

Please RSVP by 6th Dec. 2024
We will either eat at the Bistro, or if we have a 10+ we might move to the function room and so we definitely need to let the club know about numbers attending,

There is plenty of nearby accommodation if you are travelling and the golf course, which I am yet to try out, looks excellent, though hilly. The ocean view from the bistro as you know, is magnificent, though the company will be even better, dress up or down, as you like.

This event is for us to get to meet and enjoy each others company. Some have sent their apologies already as they will be travelling or interstate.



Inside this issue:

- Christmas meeting
- OPD 2024
- Letters
- AMC Update
- Its Your Funeral
- Candle & A Prayer
- Overheating PAs
- Battery Tester
- Traditions
- Movie to Watch
- MLCS Meeting
- Minister's Speech
- Knowledge Base
- Summer Warning
- Marketing
- Outback Story
- Disability & Forced marriage
- Suicide
- Virtual Marriage
- Scam Alert
- Reviews
- Comments

Cover Photo
Washer Womans' Beach,
Bendalong, at sunset.
One of the 200 beaches
in our area.

OPD REMINDER

ONLY 4 WEEKS TO GO.

You must complete the compulsory professional development activities by 31 December each calendar year.

If you do not complete your compulsory professional development activities disciplinary measures apply unless you were granted a professional development exemption. Disciplinary measures may include:

- a caution
- additional professional development
- suspension
- deregistration.

There are no elective activities. However, you can undertake further professional development if you wish to do so.

Any additional training you undertake will not be counted towards your compulsory professional development activities and will not be carried over to the next calendar year.

If you received a Certificate IV in Celebrancy in the 12 months before you registered as a celebrant, you are exempt from professional development for the calendar year of your registration.. Exemption may also apply if you registered towards the end of a calendar year. Those celebrants don't have to apply for exemption and the registration email will explain exemption for those reasons.

If you don't meet either of these criteria, you must complete your professional development activities or [apply for an exemption](#).

WARNING

If you fail to meet your 2024 OPD obligations, you may be deregistered.



Letters to the Editor

Hearing from readers is wonderful, because it lets me know that my efforts to keep you informed are valued and appreciated. It's as good as seeing a positive review from a client and always a pleasure reading. Your articles, book or movie reviews, and Celebrant Snapshots are particularly appreciated. Please keep it up.

Hi Lou Only half way through- a great read-fantastic what you do for our industry
Barry Young

Thanks Lou, as always full of great content and information! Jill Heaton

Lou just wanted to say your beautiful poem in the newsletter had me a bawling mess. As a teenager I tried to commit suicide, luckily I was saved & now at 60 plus I am ever so grateful for the blessings in my life. I have so much empathy for all concerned with suicide cases. *(name given but withheld here)*

Great you addressed the Forced Marriages and coercion topic. Very interesting articles. Looking forward to the end of year catch up on 8th December at Molly Golf Club. Mary-Louise Parkinson

Lou just wanted to say your beautiful poem in the newsletter had me a bawling mess. As a teenager I tried to commit suicide, luckily I was saved & now at 60 plus I am ever so grateful for the blessings in my life. I have so much empathy for all concerned with suicide cases. *(name given but withheld here)*

Lou thanks again for the time and effort you put into creating such a wonderful newsletter. It is much appreciated by me and I am sure many others.
Alma Anderson

I just wanted to to say thank you for your terrific newsletter! I really appreciate all that you do!
Simone Lewis

Inspirational read as always. Can't wait to make a coffee and relax with all the news
Cathy Dodd

Love the Newsletter each month so grateful for the articles & interesting news most of all Lou your hard work & dedication. Kerry Wing

It's Your **feedback** Turn!

Have you enjoyed reading this newsletter? Have you agreed or disagreed with an article, or perhaps you have another idea?

We are a community of Celebrants who learn from each other. It is your turn to have your say and be published in this newsletter.

The more we learn, the more we discover how much there is to learn.

What will you write about in this newsletter?.

You are unique. Your ideas, experiences, interpretations and creations are your own. Tell us all, about them.

By writing your ideas and processes down, you consolidate them; by sharing them with others, you expand and strengthen them. What is common sense and experience to you, may be foreign to another but if you share your thoughts, others can expand on your ideas, and in doing so, help you expand your own ideas further. Together we are not just better and stronger but raise the standard for all

LIFE GETS BETTER
together



It has been a tough year for the AMC and there have been many changes on the committee with more yet to come. A new Constitution is being prepared, nominations will soon be called for a new committee, an AGM is now expected on 30 January 2025 and so will soon be called while policies and procedures are being revised, rewritten and/or created, all to ensure a smooth path into the future. You might recall that:

- * the bulk of the old and short-lived committee resigned after causing some distress.
- * They had initiated 'anytime membership' which proved unconstitutional and unworkable and so that has been abandoned and membership records restored.
- * The much promised 'revised' webpage was a disaster and that had to be taken down and rewritten. The new page is great with a fantastic modern look and is finally working (thanks Ash). The support section will be back in December.
- * Control of the AMC Members FB Forum has been restored
- * The AMC I DO page for all celebrants has been reinitiated..
- * The Education sessions have been a great success.
- * Additional benefits for 2025 are planned and are expected to be presented at the AGM.

There is still much work to be done but it is being performed by dedicated volunteers who have the AMC and members at heart.
How good is that!!



Dear AMC Members,

Merry Christmas, dear member colleagues!
As we celebrate this joyful season, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude for each of you.

Your support and kindness you each have makes the AMC a special community, helping each other grow together as a family. Your passion, dedication, and creativity in helping couples celebrate their love is would be truly inspiring. May this festive season bring you joy, peace, and cherished moments with your loved ones. Let's continue to spread love and happiness in the coming year! Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas filled with warmth and laughter. Cheers to a bright and beautiful New Year ahead! To a better 2025 ♥

Warm Regards
A n n e m a r i e
McDonell
President
Public Officer
AG/CoCA Representative
Australian Marriage Celebrants



To see what other great education sessions and meetings are coming up, log into the [AMC Membership section](#)



The AMC IS GROWING. It has a new committee and many new members. The AMC will soon have a new and better constitution and nominations will soon open for the 2025 Committee. AMC one of the largest and oldest marriage celebrant associations in Australia with a dedicated, caring, experienced and very professional Committee. [Click this link to discover the benefits of membership;](#)



IT'S YOUR FUNERAL...(but is it really?)



The wonderful Barbara Bell is a regularly contributor to this newsletter. Full of life and laughter, she has retired from Celebrancy but with so many years of experience, she has happily and generously shares some of her knowledge, wisdom and a story or two. As we all know, funeral can be highly emotional but there are the occasional surprising events. Today we read about some of Barbara's unusual funerals.

Article by Barbara Bell

Funerals are funny things. They can be strange or happy celebrations of the deceased person's life, terribly sad, or they can induce some humour. But I suppose it depends on the celebrant's presentation and the seriousness of the participating congregation, and sometimes there is an underlying sense of humour.

Becoming a Funeral Celebrant was an entirely different kettle of fish than becoming a Marriage Celebrant. There were no written requirements and no official appointments as a funeral celebrant, so it was very much an ad hoc experience. I was so ignorant of how to conduct a service, and I made some awful mistakes. I remember the first funeral I conducted was for Mr Smith. I call him that because I have forgotten his name but not the experience. I sent poor old Mr Smith to eternity in 10 minutes or maybe it was even less than that.

I had not been given any instruction on how to conduct a funeral and the only information that the funeral directors gave me was that the family could not be contacted, and they hated their father. I often wondered if he actually got to Heaven with such a terrible sendoff from me. As far as I know he may be floating around still trying to bang on Heaven's Gate to be let in because I did not give him a proper introduction to the Gatekeeper.

Another time I conducted a service in the cemetery chapel for Auntie Flo. At the conclusion of the service the cortege proceeded in a solemn and orderly fashion to the graveside. The Funeral Directors got out their cars, only to be frantically hailed with outstretched waving of arms by the deceased's niece who was distraught; the reason being that it was not correct site. So, with a great deal of phoning, toing and froing, the Director contacted the Funeral Home to establish just where Auntie Flo was to be buried.

It turned out that Auntie Flo had many years before purchased a number of grave sites for the family close the Cemetery's gate and the grave we were directed to was incorrect. So, we all got back into our cars and turned around to go to the correct site, however, when we got there a grave had yet to be dug and so the scoop digger came and proceeded to dig out the grave. But it

struck rock and it took a very long time to dig the grave hole sufficiently large enough to encompass the coffin. Whilst the digging went on the congregation retired to the on-ground café for sustenance to bolster them until the hole was big enough for Auntie Flo to be lowered into her correct grave. It took over two hours to dig out the soil and rock. By the time it was ready for Auntie Flo half the congregation had gone home and there was only me and a few others to watch the interment. Now every time I go into the cemetery I say hello to Auntie Flo and apologise for the wait she had to endure.

I always go to the family's home to find out about the life of the person whose funeral I am to conduct. From the information I gain I am able to have knowledge about the person and if the family doesn't want to write the eulogy, I am able to do so.

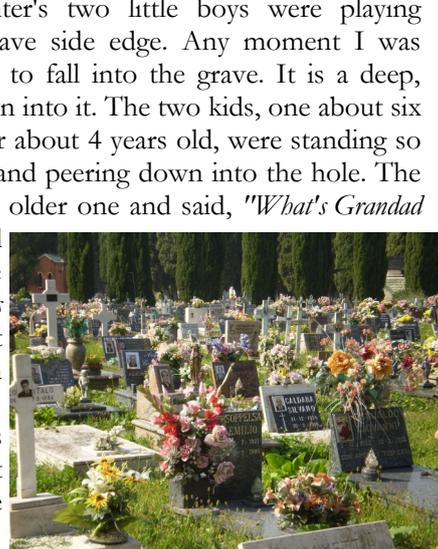


My sense of humour may be weird or even out of place. I remember one that I found both weird even unsettling, to say the least. The family and I were gathered at the kitchen table. The mother has passed away and the daughter and the father were giving me the information. However, they got into a dispute, and it became very volatile, and the father ended up in a fisticuffs fight and dragged the daughter (who was a half goth with long black hair, black painted fingernails

and black painted lips), out the door by her hair. I waited 'till the fight was over and then went on as if nothing unusual had occurred.

The following year the father died and I was again asked to conduct his funeral. We proceeded to the graveside and as the coffin was lowered at the appropriate time, the goth daughter's two little boys were playing happily around the grave side edge. Any moment I was expecting one or both to fall into the grave. It is a deep, deep, hole looking down into it. The two kids, one about six-year-old, and the other about 4 years old, were standing so very close to the edge and peering down into the hole. The little one looked at the older one and said, "*What's Grandad doing down there?*" and the other one answered, "*Because he's dead!*" How observant and matter of fact can a child be?

I have lots more stories to tell about celebrant work, but I will save them for another time.



Candle & a Prayer

Being Civil Celebrants, gives us the freedom to exclude or to include prayers and rituals in ceremonies. Annette Treloar a celebrant from Doonside, NSW and has been offering services since 2007. She was for many years, the Secretary and at times, the Vice-President of the Australian Marriage Celebrants Association of New South Wales (ACMC of NSW & Act) before the association closed only a year or two ago. With her many years of experience, she has generously submitted the following article, sharing a prayer and extracts of a script.



Here is Annette photographed by Desiree Savage for The Senior, in March 2023, for an article in which Desiree wrote:

Long-time Elvis fans and avid readers of The Senior, John Mineeff and Annette Treloar at the Seniors Festival Expo in Sydney on Thursday March 14.

[Elvis Costumes to Gala Concerts: Highlights of NSW Seniors Festival at Darling Harbour | The Senior | Senior](#)

Article by
Annette Treloar



Getting married, is a spiritual affair and so I do encourage my couples (if they so desire) to include a small prayer. I have written this very simple but meaningful prayer, please feel free to

include in your Newsletter if appropriate:

Celebrant: *Family and friends please join with me in prayer:*

“Heavenly Father. With all the trials, tribulations and health issues that life presents to us, we would like to say how grateful we are to you for bringing us safely here today. Thank you.

Lord, we wish to present to you And in Marriage.

We ask that you bless this loving union as they become Husband and Wife and to extend to them you’re loving arms to protect, comfort and guide them, and their families, throughout their lives together. May God Bless us all. Amen”



Quite often I include this around **A Candle Ceremony** particularly when remembering those that can't be there (i.e. deceased family etc) and I say these words as the candle is being lit:

Celebrant: I now ask our couple to light the Ceremonial Candle.

This candle you are about to light today is a Candle of Marriage.

Its fire is magical because it represents the light of two people in love.

May it give you courage and reassurance in darkness; warmth and safety in the cold; and strength and joy in your bodies, minds, and spirits.

But it’s also a time to reflect on those special people that whilst they can’t be with us here physically are certainly with us in spirit.

Overheating PA's

As we enter summer, we have to be cautious that we don't allow ourselves to suffer sunburn and overheating, but the same applies to our electrical equipment such as Public Address systems (PAs), microphones, and cameras. We revisit the article by Phil Timbrell, engineer and Celebrant explains his novel solution.

One Way to protect your PA

It was Saturday, 17th March 2018, and the temperature at Winmalee in the Blue Mountains had already reached 45°C by the time I had set up my PA system for a venue wedding.

I was dressed in a dark suit, which of course absorbs heat – as did my PA system which was also clothed in a black material. I do not understand why all PA systems are covered in black material but they are (*probably to make them invisible during a stage performance*). It is worth noting that commercial grade active electronic components, such as power transistors and integrated circuits, will not operate as intended as if their temperature exceeds 90°C, and this temperature is quite likely inside a fully enclosed PA box, painted black, left in a 45 degree ambient temperature, and fully exposed to the sun which is directly overhead in Summer.

On this occasion I was lucky enough to find a small piece of shade for my PA system although it was no longer in the ideal position acoustically.

After the wedding, I started to think about a portable shade for my PA.

An umbrella is the obvious choice however a golf umbrella would not look good at a wedding, especially if it had advertising on it (*which many do*).

So after a search of a few retail chains, I found a small fold up umbrella, that looked as if it would provide sufficient shade without being too obvious, and in a not too obvious colour. To my surprise, there was one small fold up model that had a screw on handle at only around \$10. These are readily available. The photo in Fig 1 shows the threaded end of the main shaft.

A few modifications to the screw on handle and I was able to screw that to the timber case of my Roland PA. Roland's use a timber box covered in a black material and it gives a sound that many experts consider superior to that from a plastic case as it has a lower resonant frequency. Timber has the obvious advantage that one can screw into it. And so the modified handle of the umbrella was screwed to the timber case (see Fig 2).

If your PA uses a moulded plastic case and you can find a flat area on the top, 5 minute Araldite® correctly mixed and applied to a roughened surface of the case will also support the umbrella.

It is then a simple matter to fit the umbrella to the case (see Fig.3).

I have used this system at a number of weddings held

during the heat of summer, and each time I do I am confident that my PA will not overheat. I am also grateful for the experience I had and the lesson learned in Winmalee on that very hot day back in 2018.

Fig 1—umbrella base

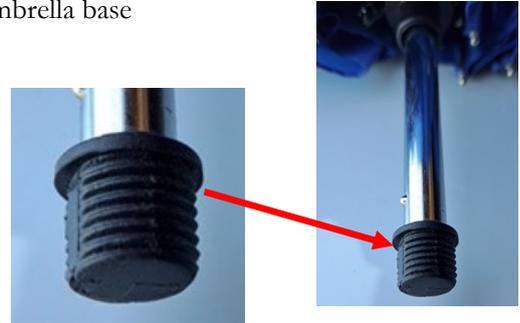


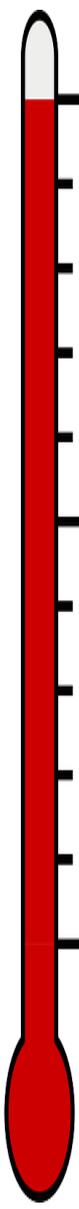
Fig 2.



Fig 3.



Please note this system will not work in very windy conditions as these umbrellas are not designed for such conditions.





BATTERY TESTER

How many batteries have you thrown out after your microphone has cut out or crackled during a ceremony because you suspected they were flat or your microphone was indicating that the charge was low? Commonly it is the PA batteries which last about 2 years are at fault but it can just as easily be the microphone batteries.

You check the charge indicator on your microphone and it shows low power and so you immediately replace all the batteries however that may not be necessary because just one battery out of the two or four batteries inside the microphone or sender might be faulty and yet you replace 2 or 4 not knowing that you are disposing of good batteries. The solution is a easy to use a battery tester to make certain that only faulty or depleted batteries are disposed of.

Duracell batteries used to be the very best battery for a great many years but now they often weaken or come close to depletion after just one ceremony and so have to be replaced before the next.

Eveready have overtaken Duracell as the most reliable and durable but they still need to be checked regularly. The best advice is to keep a stock of spare batteries which you probably already do but you can also quickly and easily test your batteries before and after each ceremony.

The Arlec Battery Tester, is a little beaut device that is

simple to use and gives you an instant battery indication. The top photo shows its actual size on an A4 print.

The contacts on the base enables testing of 9V batteries while the sliding contact on the side of the device enables testing of small button type lithium batteries up to D cells but of course you will most likely only use it for testing 9V or AA batteries.

The Arlec battery tester was recommend by Celebrant Phil Timbrell, and is now an essential tool for all Celebrants.

You can find the tester at Bunnings and Jaycar for about \$12 to \$18 or on eBay for anywhere from \$7 to \$28. Batteries also are sometimes cheaper there.

To extend the lift of your batteries, remove them from your microphone after use and keep them in a cool, dry place. Do Not leave them in your car where they can overheat.. Using 'budget' batteries is NOT recommended because although they may be cheaper, the discharge rate may be erratic and worse still, they might leak and damage equipment.



These nifty battery holders are available at Jaycar for about \$3 to help keep your batteries tidy and in good condition.

TRADITIONS?

Burying the Bourbon

In the southern states of the USA where bourbon (American whisky) is made, there is a wedding tradition that is the ritual of "Burying the Bourbon".



The belief is that you can prevent rain on the wedding day by burying a full bottle of bourbon, top-down, at the ceremony site either a month before but some say it will work if done on the day, or on a perfect day anytime within the month.

Cutting of the Groom's tie (Spain) – Cortar la corbata del novio

In Spain, during the wedding reception, the Groom will be surrounded by his Groomsmen, who will cut his tie from around his neck. The tie is then cut into small pieces and auctioned off to wedding guests. It's believed that owning a piece of the cut tie will bring good luck.

Ref: <http://goliveitblog.com/experiences/10-wedding-traditions-around-the-world/>



Chuppah or Canopy

A 'chuppah' symbolizes the home that the couple will build together. It is a canopy under which a Jewish couple traditionally stand during their wedding ceremony.

The design and the four chuppah bearers reflect the couple's philosophy, values, and personal connections.

- The cover protects
- The four poles rooted to the ground connect to heritage and a focus on goals;

The sides are an opening to the world, enabling vulnerability and accessibility,



Source: <http://www.chuppah.com/galleries/gal-pf169x.html>

Movies to Watch

"It's A Wonderful Life".

Ok, so I have recommended this one before but it is one of my all time favourites. Directed by Frank Capra, this classic movie has an incredible cast including stars, James Stewart and Donna Reed along with other great stars of the times such as Lionel Barrymore. It was released in 1946, runs for 2 hours and 10 minutes and is still, deservedly, one of the most watched Christmas family movies.

In this classic drama inspired by Charles Dickens', *A Christmas Carole*, George Bailey (James Stewart) longs to get away from his small hometown of Bedford Falls but his obligations to his family force him to stay, leading to a crisis of faith at Christmas time. James Stewart is at his very best. It is available to watch, stream, download and buy on demand on various platforms

Watching it as Celebrants, we see different ways of telling a life story, the differing perceptions we have of life and of each other.

Merry Christmas every one.





MLCS MEETING
10am , 14th November 2024,
Canberra

AMC President represented the AMC 14th November 2024 meeting with the MLCS which includes other interested parties and stakeholders such as other associations and RTO representatives. Topics covered are itemised below:

The Public Register & MarCel Portal:

The MarCel Portal and the public celebrant register are under review for improvement.

Registration and annual charge:

Celebrants are given 2 months to pay the annual fee, yet some still forget resulting in deregistration and be removed off the register. If removed, the celebrant may need to redo the Certificate IV in Celebrancy to ensure UpToDate knowledge.

The Registration fee for 2025 was listed on the agenda but discussion was not reached.

Fit and Proper Test

The law requires that Celebrants be determined to fit & proper persons and discussion was centred on how to assess and test the fit and proper criteria as there is no common legislation to define this. This is however an opportunity to check or test skills around legislation and obligations. Constraints and considerations are that legislative change might be needed for some of this change and so that can take time, and can be a protracted process. The scope will also require IT support which is dependant upon what other demands may be inherent at the time within the department.

Current law is that appointments must be decided within 3 months and payment has a 60 days period of grace with 8 reminders issued.

Strengthening the application process:

Improving professional standards is broad and challenging. New aspiring celebrants; historically had knowledge of the law. Various association representatives offered varying views as to whether current training properly prepares new Celebrants and where an additional test may again be required before approval/appointment is given. The value of Association membership to raise standards was also discussed.

OPD:

It was suggested by various associations, including the AMC, that OPD be reintroduced for first year appointees to ensure a high standard as there may be a lapse of time between course commencement, course

completion, and actual appointment.

OPD and additional meetings:

OPD could be increased to include content and additional learning for old and new celebrants to include an expansion of understanding of consent and forced marriage. With 10,000 celebrants, there is a variation in knowledge and ability.

The Marcel Portal only has capacity for 2 OPD streams and two associations proposed that OPD be handed back to RTOs to cover both compulsory and Electives.

Assistant Minister The Hon Patrick Gorman:

The Assistant Minister engaged in an online presence from WA. He said that a wedding day is the most important day of a couple's life and offered a history of he and his wife meeting and marrying. He expressed an appreciation of the work performed by Celebrants enabling Australians to have choice in shaping their special day with Celebrants not only crafting the event, but guiding the couple through the legals. He said that it is important to hear from us about what is and isn't working, looking for professional skills, legal correct and informed cultural and ethically, identifying the threshold of celebrants, OPD, lifting standards, forced marriage, consent, modernising the platforms and providing information from for all stakeholders to ensure the program is the best it can be with accessible information. He mentioned an annual survey for decisions and how can we enhance the program.

He also thanked Celebrants for our commitment to the profession, to the people and the community and to the outcome we provide.

Charles read a note from his association's President Dally Messenger III, strongly stating that he takes interest in our program.

The Minister was challenged on the capping of celebrants and said that there is no expectation on this.

He mentioned that a wedding can be both compliant and deeply meaningful so the two can go hand in hand. We must be compliant, it has to remain a lawful wedding, celebrants get to support the both.

The attendees thanked the Minister for his encouragement to ensure professionalism is going to be considered as high priority. The work of the MLCS was also recognised

The AFCC proposed that OPD be returned top 5 hours of training including 2 compulsory and 3 elective sessions. The Minister expressed interest.

.....from previous page

New Guidelines Consultation on the Guidelines

The goal is that this happens before end of year. This is an online platform for people to contribute; there are some questions that need answering and there may be a placeholder on some. With only weeks remaining before end of year to which MLCS will do its best to get the draft done.

The Shortening Time:

Members expressed concern over having difficulty in applying for SOTs after hours and on weekends with particular attention drawn to serious health concerns, The MLCS said that there have been welcoming outcomes in discussions with BDMs, who are open to real situations and circumstances. Discussions are ongoing.

Here was also discussion in regard to Court registrars requiring further training as Prescribed Authorities

- [Consultation on the future of OPD for marriage celebrants](#)
- [OPD for marriage celebrants – discussion paper](#)

The Guidelines, NOIM, Happily Before & After, and DONLIM are all under review. The MLCS will keep us apprised of changes. The writer has submitted designs for Consent brochures to the MLCS along with research material on Consent issues.

Speech to the 2024 Marriage Celebrants Associations and Networks meeting



Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General
The Hon Patrick Gorman MP was appointed Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General on 29 July 2024.

As many of you know, the new marriage law came into effect on 1 September 1963. The date coincided with the first day of spring – a season traditionally associated with new beginnings and a popular time for weddings. And a start to a very busy season for all of you!

The Federal Attorney-General at the time, Sir Garfield Barwick, believed that the new law would encourage Australians to approach marriage “lightly but advisedly”. Reminding us that, for many, a wedding day is one of the most important moments of their life.

Each couple’s wedding day is unique – each has its own story. For me, it was little over nine years ago when I married my wife Jess in a pub in Brisbane. Surrounded

by our loved ones and friends, a perfect reflection of the people that we are.

We are lucky that in Australia we get to choose the type of wedding and ceremony which best reflects our individual values. One that truly reflects who we are as people. Whether the occasion is modest or full of spectacle, you are the ones who help craft those stories.

They become shared stories in which you have played a role - an enormous privilege and a great responsibility. One that I deeply respect. That is why I am pleased to be able to talk to you today.

Purpose of the Celebrant Associations and Networks meeting

I know you use this forum to discuss a range of important issues about marriage law in Australia and the Marriage Celebrants Program. It is important that I and the Attorney-General’s Department gets to hear directly from you, and through you, those you represent and the broader celebrant community. Key to this are shared goals. A professionally skilled and ethical sector dedicated to community service. Accessible, culturally-informed and legally correct marriage services. I know you have been engaging with the Attorney-General’s Department on a range of issues when it comes to achieving these goals.

I am aware there are both challenges and opportunities ahead.

Together, we have identified the following key areas:

Firstly, establishing threshold requirements for celebrants. We must recognise that not everyone may be suited to the role of marriage celebrant. Further consideration of better threshold eligibility must be considered. It will be an important step to assist would-be applicants understand the roles and responsibilities of a celebrant at the earliest possible stage.

Secondly, we must work together to improve professional standards to raise the standard of the entire profession. We must support greater compulsory professional development, including ensuring ‘real consent’ to a marriage. Improved standards would lead to greater protection of the integrity of marriage in Australia. And align with the Government’s commitment to tackle the issue of forced marriage.

Lastly, we are working to redevelop the online celebrant portal and the Public Register of authorised celebrants. Modernising these platforms will help us increase functionality and accessibility. This is just another way the department and I want to better support you in your roles as marriage

Continued next page.....

.....from previous page

celebrants. And we want to ensure the Public Register meets the needs of marrying couples.

I am hearing there is a great deal more you are passionate about. I appreciate your active engagement with the department to share your experience and advice.

Engagement with the Attorney-General's Department

The department and I are keen to continue to hear from you. You will soon have an annual and targeted survey to help the department measure its performance against its stated goals. They are seeking your input about how the department can enhance Program delivery.

I support the department in its goal to seek out better ways to deliver services, and to do so in consultation with you. I encourage you to continue your productive engagement with the department so the team can ensure the program continues to meet the needs of its users.

Conclusion

The *Marriage Act 1961* has served us well for many years. While there are opportunities to do things better within the existing framework, there are some inevitable boundaries.

Whatever the limitation, it should not diminish our resolve to continuously seek to innovate, improve and clarify. To all of you, I wish to express my appreciation for your time today and over the many years you have participated in this important forum.

I thank you for your commitment to your profession.

I thank you for your ongoing dedication to marriage celebrancy in Australia.

[The Hon Patrick Gorman MP | Our ministers – Attorney-General's portfolio](#)

The *Married Women's Property Act* enabled married women to hold property of their own, sue and be sued, enter into contracts, be subject to bankruptcy laws, be liable for the debts contracted before their marriage, and for the maintenance of their children. Victoria passed legislation in 1884, New South Wales in 1879, and the remaining states passed similar legislation between 1890-97.
<https://timeline.awava.org.au/archives/21>

KNOWLEDGE BASE

Electronic signatures on marriage documents—Guidelines 4.17

Available technology enables documentation to be completed electronically, including using electronic signatures. The *Electronic Transactions Act 1999* applies to the Marriage Act. As such, it is acceptable for couples, celebrants and witnesses to complete marriage documentation electronically, for example, using an iPad, provided that the recipient of the electronic document/s, such as the registry of births, deaths and marriages, consents to receiving the documents electronically.

This does not include the Form 15 certificate of marriage, which must be in hardcopy because the Marriage Act requires that it is handed to the couple by the celebrant.

SUMMER WARNING

MAGNETIC SIGNS

This is an important reminder every summer. Car signs are useful at venues and on the road as well as in carparks, telling clients you exist. Magnetic signs are versatile but need care. The warmer months are here and so sign care is crucial. Though even in cold or rainy months, care is still required. Weather and especially heat, can damage the sign and so leaving it attached to your car for too long can damage paintwork as mud and grime can surround the sign and bake onto your paintwork but if it is very hot, the glue holding the sign to the magnet can melt and seep into your paintwork causing permanent paint damage.

Tips to avoid damage:

- When you wash your car, wash the sign.
- Apply sun resistant vinyl protector to keep them like new
- Polish the car regularly to keep paint in condition
- Remove the signs from your car regularly
- Dry and clean the paint and back of the sign before you apply the sign to your car panel.
- DO NOT let the signs bake in the sun.

A sample of the writer's sign is to the left and notice the QR code for easy access to a webpage.



Marketing

TIPS FOR NEW & SUCCESSFUL CELEBRANTS

Two questions often asked, by both new and established Celebrants, are *“How do I start”* and *“How do I get more business”*.

Marketing is not just a few pics on the web, it is every single contact and your professionalism that markets you.

Consider what else can you add to this list and how many can you mark off as attended to?

1. Create a Business Plan

- i) set some goals and deadlines – a goal without a deadline is just a dream.
- ii) How often to you wish to work?
- iii) Is Celebrancy second to your full-time job/career or your primary income?
- iv) Can you work weekdays, weekends or only set days of the week.
- v) Do you want a ceremony or more every week, or is one a month is fine?
- vi) What area will you cover i.e. How far are you honestly prepared to travel?

2. Most business collapse within 3-5 years. Use your business plan to determine your fees to make your business viable and sustainable:

- i) List & Calculate all your business expenses including fee, taxes, depreciation, vehicle, advertising, printing, forms, etc.
- ii) Determine what it will cost you to deliver a single ceremony
- iii) Add a profit margin that will fund your next ceremony
- iv) Start as you wish to continue i.e. don't discount to get business because the discounted rate will be your benchmark for all future booking
- v) DO NOT set your fees by what others charge as they may not have a business plan, may be a hobbyist, may not provide the same level of service, and could be operating at a loss.
- vi) Remember that you are not a charity, but that you are in business
- vii) Will you include the BDM Certificate or charge extra for it
- viii) Charge a non-refundable 'lodgement fee' or similar remembering that 'deposits' and 'booking fees' are usually legally refundable upon cancellation but a Lodgement Fee is not as it is for a service already conducted.

3. Manage accounts, keeping a record of enquiries, bookings, expenditure and income.

- i) This is fundamental to being in Business.
- ii) Look at obtaining an accounts management system or CRM, or create one of your own in a spreadsheet program such as Excel

4. Know your duties and requirements — Reread all of the assignments you undertook during your training, and review all of your assignments.

- i) Consider what has changed or how you could improve on your assignments.
- ii) Some fundamentals are at the start of your Celebrancy course, but many forget those by the end and so pay special attention to those..
- iii) Engage in Celebrancy Groups and research posted questions and answers.

5. Download the Act, Regulations, Guidelines, Certificates, Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets.

- i) Have them ALL on hand for any questions
- ii) Read a section or document every day, even if just a paragraph.
- iii) Keep UpToDate

5. Read the NOIM and other documents, front to back and practice completing them.

- i) You will be surprised how many Celebrants have never done this and have no idea what it says.
- ii) One of the most frequently asked questions is about who can witness a NOIM even though the answer is on the NOIM, Act, Guidelines and Tips sheets

6. Keep a back-up set of documents

- i) All sorts of disasters can occur and so it is important to have a spare set of docs that can be hand written if the need arises.
- ii) Keep them in a weather proof protective folder in your car for emergencies e.g. damaged, faulty or lost certificates, misspelled names etc

7. Have a change of clothes in your car in case of wardrobe malfunctions.

- i) Weather, spilled coffee, a sudden tear, a

.....from previous page

clashing colour, can all be fixed with a change of clothes

- ii) Keep a sewing kit in the glove box

8. Create an 'emergency kit' to address every disaster.

- i) Include items such as a stapler, scissors, sewing kit, bobby pins, breath freshener, sticky tape, comb etc.

9. Practice & Critique yourself

- i) Write sample ceremonies and practice delivery
- ii) Record your own ceremonies on video for a self-critique
- iii) Ask an honest friend or Celebrant to watch one of your ceremonies.

9. Research questions and become the expert.

- i) Every time a question is asked, write it down and research the answer and you'll be an expert in no time
- ii) If you don't know the answer to a question; say *"I'm not sure about that but will check it and get back to you"* but make sure fulfil your promise.
- iii) Never 'create' an answer as it could be wrong.

9. Create a draft response for every contact

- i) Prepare email and text responses to ensure they are professional and accurate
- ii) ensure that you are not reinventing the wheel at every enquiry.

9. Join an association such as the AMC

- i) AMC includes Public Liability, Professional Indemnity and Copyright Insurances
- ii) has a members useful directory
- iii) Has excellent resources.
- iv) TIP If your chosen association has 'marriage' in its title, it will appear more often in web searches.
- v) Join your associations' online discussion groups to study question asked and then research
- vi) Note that the answers given in forums may not always be correct and if you get something terribly wrong, *"I got the answer on FB"* is not a defence however quoting for the Guidelines, Regulations or Act can be.

9. Meet with other celebrants and find a mutual backup.

- i) It gives you credibility if you are unable to attend a ceremony for any reason e.g. health or accident,
- ii) It may get you a job or two by cross referral.
- iii) You'll have someone to debrief with.

Let people know you exist.

- i) Tell family, friends and co-workers of your registration
- ii) Advertise in any way you feel comfortable.
- iii) If you remain invisible you will never get a booking.
- iv) Create a means for others to find you e.g. signs, website, Facebook page, Instagram, Pinterest or other Social Media, online directories etc
- v) Take photos at every ceremony for your advertising

9. If you post a photo at a location, credit the location and vendors and suggest they do the same to get cross promotion

10. Plan your business and promotional strategy to get the business that you want:

Decide on your ideal couple
target that specific couple in all marketing

9. Disclose your location in advertising, especially on your webpage. It saves time, money and effort while stopping irrelevant enquiries

Research constantly and learn trends while discovering innovative ideas and methods

9. Review your ceremonies, methods, processes and templates regularly or at least every 3 months to keep them fresh and efficient:

Debrief after each and every ceremony you perform and evaluate how to improve:

- i) What worked very well?
- ii) What needs to change?
- iii) What should you not do?
- iv) What could be done better?
- v) What mistakes were made and how to you correct them?
- vi) What obstacles did you encounter & what is the best way to overcome them?
- vii) Were the clients happy with your performance and why?
- viii) Were the PA, signing table, etc well placed or do they need better locations?

Prepare for each Ceremony:

- i) Create checklists for each step
- ii) Look into a full length mirror before you step out

Be careful not to plagiarise or appropriate another's work and always give credit to authors or sources of poetry or readings etc.

- i) Failing to credit an author or source could result in your prosecution and a prosecution could result in deregistration.
- ii) Don't use photos that you don't own or have no

.....from previous page

- authority or permission to use
- iii) It is inappropriate to read or use religious acts and rituals if you are not religious or do not understand the purpose of the ritual (research it and ask a believer to perform the reading or ritual)
- iv) Appropriation of religious acts, particularly if out of context, can offend and embarrass and in some instances may be illegal
- v) Don't use terms or words that you don't understand e.g. Godparent is a religious title

Check the spelling for key words e.g. aisle instead of isle

Practice using inclusive language and look for alternative phrases

Decide what method you will use to register ceremonies and practice it

Create systems, methods and habits for common functions to avoid errors

Create checklists

Practice smiling for photos

Look into a full length mirror every time you dress for a ceremony or ask another to look you over to avoid wardrobe malfunctions

Have a mint or similar to freshen your breath before ceremonies

Have a hand sanitiser freely available and sanitise between handshakes if possible.

Be alert to dangers (based on real events) - Always examine the area for hazards:

- i) If under a tree, examine the tree for snakes, potential bird dropping, wasps nest etc
- ii) Will the arbour withstand a gust of wind?
- iii) Is there any wet paint?
- iv) Are there any ant-nests in the ceremonial space
- v) Are you far enough from water & waves
- vi) Are there any territorial animals in the vicinity e.g. magpies, bulls, geese etc.

Create and determine your style:

- i) what sort of Celebrant do you wish to be
- ii) just what you point of difference
- iii) What is your look and character, (and it's ok if you don't wish to stand out)?

Review your equipment after each ceremony:

- i) Did you need/use everything
- ii) What can be discarded to make it easier?
- iii) Will adding an item make it easier and more efficient?
- iv) How do you transport everything i.e. do you need a trolley?

Review your office setup, stationery, filing,

computer file backup, secure storage (safe).

- i) What changes can you make to streamline or to make better use of space & time.



A Celebrant walks into an outback cafe at Christmas time with a full-grown emu behind him. The waitress asks them for their orders. The Celebrant says, 'A hamburger, chips and a coke,' and turns to the emu, 'What's yours?' and is surprised that the Emu responds, 'Sounds great, I'll have the same.'

A short time later the waitress returns with the order 'That will be \$25.40 please,' and the Celebrant reaches into his pocket and pulls out the exact change and pays.

The next day, they come again and the Celebrant says, 'A hamburger, chips and a coke.' The emu again says, 'Sounds great, I'll have the same', and again the Celebrant reaches into his pocket and pays with exact change.

This becomes routine until the two enter again. 'The usual?' asks the waitress.

'No, it's Friday night, so I'll have a steak, baked potato and a salad,' says the Celebrant.

'Same for me,' says the emu.

Shortly the waitress brings the order and says, 'That will be \$42.62.' Once again the Celebrant pulls the exact change out of his pocket and places it on the table.

The waitress cannot hold back her curiosity any longer. 'Excuse me mate, how did you teach the Emu to talk and how do you manage to always pull the exact change from your pocket every time?'

'Well, love' says the Celebrant 'a few years ago, I was cleaning out the storeroom and found an old lamp. When I cleaned it, a Genie appeared and offered me two wishes. My first wish was that if I ever had to pay for anything, I would just put my hand in my pocket and the right amount of money would always be there.'

'That's brilliant!' says the waitress. 'Most people would ask for a million dollars or something, but you'll always be as rich as you want, for as long as you live!'

'That's right. Whether it's a litre of milk or a Rolls Royce, the exact money is always there.' says the Celebrant..

Still curious the waitress asks, 'What's with the bloody emu?'

The Celebrant pauses, sighs, and answers, 'My second wish was for a tall bird with a big arse and long legs, who agrees with everything I say!!'





FORCED MARRIAGE

Submission to the Attorney-General's Department's Enhancing Civil Protections and Remedies for Forced Marriage Consultation Paper

8 October 2024

People with Disability Australia (PWDA) welcomed the opportunity to provide input to the Attorney-General's Department's [Enhancing Civil Protections and Remedies for Forced Marriage Consultation Paper](#).

PWDA regularly participates in state, federal and international policy processes concerning modern slavery. This is to ensure modern slavery efforts are disability inclusive.

Three other disability organisations endorsed this submission:

- [Women with Disabilities Australia](#)
- [National Ethnic Disability Alliance](#)
- [Inclusion Australia](#)

Australia has a lack of data about the nature of forced marriage of people with disability and how often it occurs.

The United Kingdom's (UK) Forced Marriage Unit reported that in 2023 that 24% of forced marriage cases involved victim-survivors with 'mental capacity concerns'. UK literature focused on victim-survivors with intellectual disability.

This submission focuses on intellectual disability, whilst acknowledging other groups may make up the 24% of cases.

The submission explores

- the nuances of forced marriage of people with intellectual disability,
- awareness raising and education, gaps in legal protections to prevent and respond to forced marriage.

[Read the SUBMISSION \(.docx\)](#)

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Co-design and co-produce a research study to better understand forced marriage of people with disability.

Recommendation 2 – Start collecting data on whether people at risk of, or in a forced marriage

have disability, the type(s) of disability and the supports they receive.

Recommendation 3 – Education and awareness raising activities to include

specific sections and modules on forced marriage of people with intellectual disability.

Recommendation 4 – Accessibly co-design and co-deliver education and awareness raising about forced marriage of people with disability. Focus on including people with Intellectual Disability and representative organisations.

Recommendation 5 – Target education and awareness raising of forced marriage to people with disability, disability advocacy services, disability service providers, disability safeguarding and oversight mechanisms, healthcare providers, marriage celebrants and Government agencies that assist people with disability.

Recommendation 6 – Amend the Code of Practice for Marriage Celebrants to require celebrants ensure that people with intellectual disability have access to independent supported decision-making before deciding whether to marry, and that the decision to marry represents the person's genuine will and preferences.

Recommendation 7 – Amend the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for Authorised Celebrants to provide people with disability with supported decision-making to exercise their right to legal capacity. Include steps celebrants can take when they suspect a person with disability is being forced to marry, including referral to individual advocacy services.

https://pwd.org.au/submission-disability-and-forced-marriage/?utm_source=miragenews&utm_medium=miragenews&utm_campaign=news&fbclid=IwY2xjawF5SvYleHRuA2FjbQIxMQABHSdWlbeYvTh7rZYsADhWGbTrwvIm9RnCadqEJX_ZNfLbd3zz3s1uCiAYEw_aem_JQFISFF6gMdanAbcOvOyag





Australian health advice you can count on.

Good mental health | healthdirect



Mental Health benefits of exercise?

If you exercise regularly, it can help:

- reduce stress
- boost your memory

It can reduce symptoms of mental health conditions like depression, anxiety or schizophrenia and can help with recovery from mental health issues



- Exercise can benefit your mental health as well as your physical health.
- Exercising regularly can reduce stress, help you sleep better, and aid recovery from mental illness.
- If you are new to exercising, start slow in a setting where you feel comfortable.
- Exercise has many benefits, not only for your physical health but also your mental health.

If you are new to exercise, you can start slowly and choose something you enjoy.

Exercise has many benefits for your physical health. Physical activity helps reduce your risk of illnesses, such as:

- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- obesity
- cancer

Exercise can help people with illnesses and conditions such as:

- stroke
- Alzheimer's disease
- Parkinson's disease
- dementia
- Exercise and mental health | healthdirect



Daily actions for good mental health

Research conducted by MindSpot has shown that people who regularly do the below actions tend to have better mental health than people who don't do them.

MindSpot refers to these as 'the Big Five', and their research has shown that the more often you do these actions, the better your mental health may be.

Meaningful activities

These are any actions that you enjoy or that give you a sense of accomplishment. A meaningful activity could be listening to music you like, or watching a favourite TV show.

Healthy thinking

Examples of healthy thinking include keeping perspective and talking to yourself with kindness.



Goals and plans

Having goals is important to keep you energised and motivated. Goals give you something to look forward to and can help to prevent dwelling on past problems.

Healthy routine

Keeping up a healthy routine doesn't need to be complicated. It can be as simple as going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, or a routine linked to our roles and relationships.



Social connections

Staying connected to AMC celebrant colleagues, friends and family helps you to feel validated and reminds you that you belong. For more information and to complete the Big Five self-assessment sheet, go to the website.



Resources and support

Find out more about maintaining good mental health. Try this mental health check-in to find out if you might need some help at the moment.

If you are struggling to feel happy, cope with everyday life, find meaning or feel connected to others, you can talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Visit MindSpot for more tips on good mental health.

There is a lot of support and information available in person, online and by telephone.

Visit Beyond Blue or call 1300 22 4636 for counselling and support.

Find your local headspace centre, contact headspace or call 1800 650 890 for support and counselling for young people.

Try ReachOut for mental health information for young people and parents.

Check out Black Dog Institute for a variety of digital tools and apps to help improve mental health.

For advice and to get connected to local mental health services, you can call Head to Health on 1800 595 212.

Check the operating times.

MARRIAGE IN PRISON

To be eligible for marriage, couples need only be two consenting adults who are not married to anyone else and are within Australian borders.



Sounds simple enough but what if they are in prison?

According to [The Prison Direct](#), there are many personal reasons inmates choose to get

married while in prison. Some do it prior to incarceration to make visitation easier. Others find love while imprisoned and get married before release. Here are some of the top motivations they listed:

- **Companionship:** Prison can be lonely. Getting married provides emotional support and a confidant who understands the prison experience.
- **Security:** Some inmates get married for protection from other inmates. Being married sends a message that the inmate is committed to someone on the outside.
- **Normalcy:** Even if separated, marriage provides a sense of normal life. It represents hope for a future together after release.
- **Religion:** Some religions encourage marriage. Inmates may want to get married for spiritual reasons.
- **Privileges:** Married inmates can sometimes receive expanded visitation rights, conjugal visits, and other privileges.
- **Love:** While less common, some inmates do find genuine love and companionship during incarceration.

According to the [American Wedding Blog](#), prison walls aren't a barrier to love. Prisoners can and do cultivate loving, long-term relationships and when a prison inmate and their spouse-to-be decide to marry, they must plan and organize a ceremony and find a celebrant just like any other couple, however, unlike other couples, prison wedding planning is frequently complicated by legal hurdles, paperwork, administrative blocks, strict procedures and restrictions, security clearances, and uncertainty.

There is even an American TV series dedicated to 'Prison Brides', where Lifetime asserts that the series *Prison Brides* is unscripted. It finished its inaugural season in late March 2024. The show follows seven women from all over the world, including an Australian woman, who fell in love with seven men who are all in American federal prisons for violent crimes, ranging from carjacking to armed robbery to second-degree



murder. The series chronicles the journeys of these couples as they navigate their complicated relationships with the odds stacked against them. Most of the women cast in *Prison Brides* season 1 had never been to the United States before traveling there to meet their incarcerated loved ones. They all **met their men through pen pal programs for those who were in the American prison system**. Some of the couples cast in the series are dating, engaged, or even legally married. Though some of the men remained in prison for the duration of the series, some were released as these women risked everything to be with them.

- [Prison Brides Season 1: Which Couples Are Still Together? \(& Which Broke Up\)](#)
- [Watch Prison Brides Full Episodes, Video & More | Lifetime](#)

The situation may vary from state to state, but in NSW, a prisoner may marry inside a correctional facility or prison but there are complications and applications.

1. The Prisoner must firstly apply for permission to marry. The necessary application form is available inside the prison. Nothing happens if the prisoner has not been granted permission.
2. The Prison Chaplain, rather than an external Civil Celebrant, is sometimes preferred by the prison.
3. All prisoners have a Master Index Number (MIN) which is used in NSW Prisons to identify prisoners linking all their records and location. The Celebrant needs that MIN for communication and when visiting. The current location of an inmate, the Corrective Services NSW Inmate Location Line can be contacted on [\(02\) 8346 1000](tel:0283461000) or by email: CScorporatesupport@dcj.nsw.gov.au, 8.30am to 4.30pm - Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). You must confirm your identity and provide the name and date of birth or name and Master Index Number (MIN) of the inmate.

.....from previous page

4. Visitors need to be on the prisoners visitor list to visit and pass a security clearance to be issued with a Visitors Identification Number (VIN). The fiancé' and the Celebrant each require a VIN and this can usually be done at the reception (front counter).
5. Biometric identification systems are currently installed at 16 NSW correctional centres, and are used to photograph a visitor's face, scan their irises and capture their fingerprints. The system is networked across all 16 centres, with the exception of the Special Purpose Centre, Long Bay. At centres where there is no biometric identification system, visitors will be required to produce the forms of ID even if they have already been issued with a VIN.
6. The NOIM can of course be lodged with just one signature and the second, that of the prisoner, can be obtained just before the ceremony if not already obtained during a visit.
7. The DONLIM could be signed by the prisoner during a visit of just before the ceremony.
8. The Celebrant can communicate with the prisoner beforehand, perhaps by Audio Visual Link (AVL) or in a personal visit. The inmate is required to complete a Family Video Contact application form, which is available from the officer in charge of video conferencing or the Services And Programs Officer (SAPO) at each correctional centre. *See [Video conferencing for professionals](#)*
9. The prison can, with the prisoner's permission, allow a viewing of the prisoner's MIN photocard which is of course is a government issued photo ID.
10. The Corrective Services NSW has a 'CSNSW Visits App' has been designed for families, friends and legal professionals who wish to visit an inmate. It provides useful information about correctional centres, including phone numbers, addresses (linked to maps), transport options, visiting times and conditions, legal visits and other relevant information.
11. The prisoner may have difficulty providing the required proof of date & place of birth as the prisoner is highly unlikely to have a birth certificate inside the prison and depending on the offence, the prisoner's passport may have been cancelled. An external party such as a solicitor, relative, or fiancé will however often be able to provide IDs.
12. Before travelling for a visit, call the correctional centre to confirm your visit and visiting time. To enter the prison, the Celebrant, as mentioned, must be on an approved visitors list. The first step is to check in at the gate or reception where your identity will be verified and an application listing time of arrival or entry, may be required but as the number of visitors per day may be restricted, some organisation and contact with other parties beforehand may be required.
13. The Celebrant will usually enter the prison via the 'legal services' entrance which is separate to the general visitors. The Celebrant may or may not undergo a physical search.
14. Do not take anything 'extra' into the prison and make sure you have everything on your way out. The Celebrant will have to secure some items such as keys, watches, jewellery, smart watches or activity trackers, in a locker which can be collected on the way out.
15. Each prison gate or checkpoint, has two doors and there are several gates consisting of narrow but short corridors with secure doors at either end, to go through. One door locks securely before the other opens. Not ideal if you suffer from claustrophobia.
16. It is of course a prison and so direct or video surveillance is a given.
17. The Celebrant of course has to provide the prisoner with the required before/after pamphlet and so could post that, or ask the front desk to get it to the prisoner, or hand it over in a visit if allowed.
18. The consent meeting can be held on the wedding day or the Celebrant could make a visit beforehand.
19. Be aware that the Celebrant needs to set aside a significant amount of time for any visit to the prison because prisons can go into lockdown without notice and so the Celebrant could wait for two hours or more and not be told why, or could even be refused entry without explanation but usually a security issue that may have nothing to do with the Celebrant or the prisoner.
20. For security purposes, no one will be advised of any prisoner transfers in advance and so again, the Celebrant could be waiting for hours only to then be told that the prisoner had been transferred to another facility or to a court and

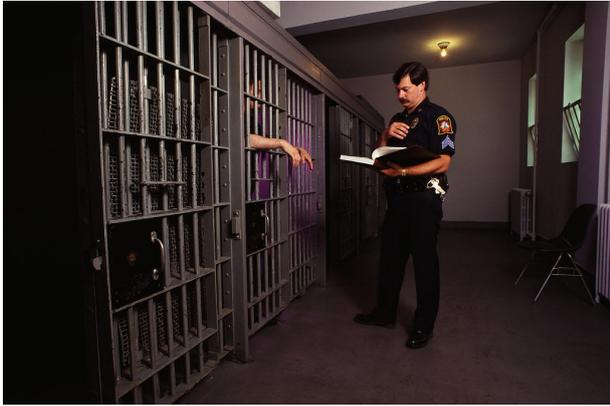


Continued next page.....

.....from previous page

so has to be located and new arrangements may be necessary.

- Determine who will be the witnesses? Will they be Prison guards, other permitted visitors, social workers etc? Check with the prison and couple. You cannot be certain that prison official will agree to be a witness for security purposes.



- Permission will also be required from the Operational Manager to have a space for the ceremony and the Celebrant will be assigned a security escort.
- Prison guards are interesting people. Some are very professional, cooperative and considerate but they may be under pressure dealing with hardened criminals, threats, abuse and more and so may try to show their dominance, treating the Celebrant as a prisoner and so don't be offended, just be cooperative, patient, kind and confident.

These links may be useful:

- <https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/csnsw-fact-sheets/visiting-an-inmate.pdf>
- [The experience of having a partner in prison—A systematic review and meta-ethnography - McDonnell - 2023 - Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology - Wiley Online Library](#)



SUICIDE

As Celebrants we encounter people at the greatest moments of love in their lives. At a wedding, the love is directed at the couple. At a Naming Ceremony, the love is directed at the family. At a Funeral or Memorial, the love is shared by all in attendance but the greater the love, can mean greater grief. We are not counsellors but we may be the first to see the impact of grief.

Christmas is renowned as a time of great joy, family, gatherings and incredible hope however while most of us enjoy festivities, there are many who are reminded of their loneliness, isolation, separateness and despair. The suicide rate actually increases during the Christmas period. As Celebrants, we are not counsellors, but we can be compassionate and maybe save a life just by listening, and obtaining permission to call for help when we see the signs.

- Suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians aged between 15 and 44 years.
- Risk factors for suicide include mental illness, stressful life events, previous suicide attempts and trauma.
- Talking to someone who has suicidal thoughts can help reduce stigma and help them reach out for support.
- Many people will give some kind of warning before they attempt suicide.
- It's important to know the warning signs of suicide and to reach out if you or someone you know has suicidal thoughts.
- Warning Signs of Suicide

[Download PDF](#)

The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

Talking about:

- Wanting to die
- Great guilt or shame
- Being a burden to others

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE:

The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

<p>TALKING ABOUT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Wanting to die ▶ Great guilt or shame ▶ Being a burden to others 	<p>FEELING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live ▶ Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage ▶ Unbearable emotional or physical pain
<p>CHANGING BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Making a plan or researching ways to die ▶ Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will ▶ Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast ▶ Displaying extreme mood swings ▶ Eating or sleeping more or less ▶ Using drugs or alcohol more often 	

Continued next page.....

.....from previous page

Feeling:

- Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- *Unbearable emotional or physical pain*

Changing behavior, such as:

- Making a plan or researching ways to die
- Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
- Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Eating or sleeping more or less
- Using drugs or alcohol more often

If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.

What are the risk factors for suicide?

Suicide is complex and there are many risk factors that might lead a person to have suicidal thoughts or behaviours.

No one can predict who will take their own life. However, there are some risk factors including:

stressful life events, such as financial trouble, a relationship breakdown or bereavement

- physical illness
- current mental illness such as depression
- a history of mental illness or a previous suicide attempt
- misusing drugs or alcohol
- poor living conditions
- *trauma such as family violence, sexual assault or abuse*

What are some of the warning signs of suicide?

It's not always obvious that a person is struggling with suicidal thoughts, but many people do give some kind of warning before they attempt suicide.

They might:

describe feeling hopeless or worthless

- stop wanting to do the things they usually enjoy
- withdraw by not replying to your messages, calls or emails, or become 'distant'
- become irritable or have emotional outbursts
- withdraw from friends, family or regular activities
- talk or joke about not being alive anymore

Sometimes there are no warning signs of suicide at all. If you are worried about someone, ask if they are okay, speak with them and get professional advice from others.

How do I talk to a person who has suicidal thoughts?

If you, or someone else, are at immediate risk of suicide, call triple zero (000) and ask for an ambulance.

Conversations are important and could save a life. Talking to someone who has suicidal thoughts can reduce stigma and help them reach out for support. It is best to act immediately as it can stop someone from attempting suicide.

There are four steps for suicide prevention:

- 1) **Ask** – Be direct and don't be afraid to ask, 'Are you thinking about suicide?'. Asking lowers the risk, shows that you care and offers a safe space for them to speak.
- 2) **Listen and stay** – Listen, take what they say seriously and don't leave them alone. Reassure the person that you can support them. Knowing you care will help them to feel less alone.
- 3) **Get help** – If someone's life is in danger get help immediately. If the danger is not immediate encourage the person to get help by talking to a doctor, counsellor or psychologist or call a helpline such as Lifeline (13 11 14).
- 4) **Follow up** – Remind them that suicidal thoughts are just thoughts and don't have to become actions. Check in with them often and make sure they are getting professional help.

You can also read up on suicide to better understand what the person may be going through.

Suicide can sometimes be prevented and it is important to start a conversation with someone you are worried about. Remember to look after yourself as well. Helping a suicidal person can make you feel stressed or overwhelmed, so it's important that you find someone to talk to as well.

What should I do if someone is going to attempt suicide?

If you are with someone who is going to attempt suicide:

- Stay calm and stay with the person.
- Call triple zero (000) and tell the operator that someone is suicidal or take them to a hospital emergency department.
- Don't leave the person alone unless you are worried about your own safety.
- Keep yourself safe. Ask for the police if the person is being aggressive or threatening towards you.

Warning signs of suicide

Warning signs are the behaviours and noticeable changes that may indicate that a young person is thinking about or planning suicide.

Knowing the warning signs for suicide can help us to recognise those at risk. The greater the number of risk factors and warning signs, the more likely the young person is at risk of attempting suicide.

It is not uncommon for young people to display one or more of these behaviours at various times,

Continued next page.....

.....from previous page

especially in times of stress. However it is always best to act safely and to talk to the young person as soon as possible about what is going on for them and whether they are having thoughts of suicide.

Behaviours which may indicate that a young person is at imminent risk of suicide include:

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Planning ways to kill themselves and/ or trying to access the means to kill themselves
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, that life is not worth living
- Engaging in reckless or risky behaviour without concern for their safety
- Talking or writing about being a burden to others
- Increasing their use of drugs or alcohol
- Withdrawing from friends, teachers and family
- Noticeable changes in mood including increased levels of anger or agitation
- Taking less care in their appearance (not washing, appearing dishevelled, etc.)
- Giving away possessions
- Saying goodbye to loved ones.

Suicide contagion

Suicide contagion refers to the process whereby one suicide or suicidal act within a school, community or geographic area increases the likelihood that others will attempt suicide. See headspace School Support fact sheet Suicide Contagion for more information on those at risk.

Common Warning Signs

Talking about:

- Feeling unbearable pain
- Death or a recent fascination with death
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, or trapped
- Feeling guilt, shame, or anger
- *Feeling like they are a burden to others*

Changes in behaviour or mood:

- Recent suicide attempt
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Losing interest in personal appearance or hygiene
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or community
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Giving away prized possessions
- A recent episode of depression, emotional distress, and/or anxiety
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Becoming violent or being a victim of violence
- Expressing rage
- Recklessness

Who is more at risk of suicide?

People in the following groups are more at risk of suicide:

Children and young people

Suicide is the number one cause of death for people aged 15 to 24 years. Children and young people might attempt suicide after being exposed to someone attempting or dying by suicide. This is because they have less developed coping skills when in distress.

If you know a child or young person who has been affected by suicide in their family, it's very important to provide support and maintain open communication with them. If a child or young person talks about suicide, don't ignore it. Ask them if they are thinking about suicide, and get help if they need it.

Men

Men make up 3 in every 4 deaths by suicide in Australia and males are more likely to die by suicide than females. This may be because Australian males may be less likely to seek help from friends, family or professionals when it comes to their mental health.

Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander people

The suicide rate among Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander people is higher than in the general Australian population. This can be due to:

- experiences of discrimination
- continuing impacts of colonisation
- forced removal of children
- cultural suppression
- *exclusion*

Previous suicidal behaviour

People who have previously attempted suicide are more likely to die by suicide than those who haven't. It is the largest single factor that can predict future suicide risk and death by suicide.

It's important to keep supporting anyone who has previously attempted suicide. The risk of re-attempt remains high throughout their lives but is a lot higher in the first year following their attempt.

People with mental illness

There's a strong link between suicidal behaviours and many mental health conditions, such as:

depression
schizophrenia
alcohol and other substance abuse disorders
personality disorders

Sexually and gender-diverse (LGBTIQ+A+) people

The stigma and discrimination experienced by some gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex youth can significantly impact their mental health. It can contribute to social isolation or family rejection. This can increase the risk of suicide.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people

People from CALD backgrounds may be at higher risk of suicide due to:

- social isolation
- separation from family and community

.....from previous page

- language barriers that reduce access to services
- financial stress

Australia has one of the largest multicultural populations worldwide. Among some cultures, there's also stigma surrounding mental health issues that discourages people from seeking help.

Older people

Declining health, chronic pain, social isolation, loneliness, loss and bereavement among older Australians may lead to suicidal thoughts.

The risk of suicide for older people increases when they don't seek help for mental health issues. This is noted more in men, as stigma and lack of access to or knowledge of the available services may play a role.

It's important to pay attention to the wellbeing of older people in your family, neighbourhood and community. Seek help if they need it.

Are there 'protective' factors for suicide?

There are ways you can help to protect yourself and others from suicidal thoughts or actions.

Protective factors that improve resilience and reduce the chance of suicidal behaviour include:

having strong, healthy relationships with family and friends

- feeling in control
 - having a clear purpose
 - improving harmony within the family
 - knowing how and where to find help when needed
 - accessing links to available health services
 - **Resources and support**
- ◇ Call Lifeline (24-hour crisis support) on 13 11 14 or chat online.
 - ◇ Contact the Suicide Call Back Service (phone and online counselling) — 1300 659 467.
 - ◇ Kids Helpline offers online and phone counselling to young people aged 5 to 25 — call 1800 55 1800 or chat online.
 - ◇ Beyond Blue provides information, counselling and support for mental health — call 1300 22 4636 or chat online.
 - ◇ Beyond Now is a phone app that helps a person stay safe when experiencing suicidal thoughts.
 - ◇ MensLine Australia offers free 24/7 telephone and online counselling for Australian men.
 - ◇ *State- and territory-based services*
 - ◇ ACT — Mental Health Triage Crisis and Assessment Team: 1800 629 354
 - ◇ NSW — NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
 - ◇ NT — Northern Territory Mental Health Line: 1800 682 288
 - ◇ QLD — 13 HEALTH: 13 43 25 84

- ◇ SA — Mental Health Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service: 13 14 65
- ◇ TAS — Mental Health Helpline: 1800 332 388
- ◇ VIC — The Royal Melbourne Hospital Mental Health Service: (03) 9342 7000
- ◇ WA — Mental Health Emergency Response Line: 1300 555 788

Looking for information for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people?

13Yarn is a free crisis support phone service run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call them on 13 92 76 (13 YARN).

Black Dog Institute has social and emotional wellbeing resources for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Yarn Safe by headspace has free online support for young people aged 12-25 and their support system.

- ◇ <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/warning-signs-of-suicide#signs>
- ◇ <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/warning-signs-of-suicide>
- ◇ <https://headspace.org.au/assets/School-Support/Identifying-risk-factors-and-warning-signs-for-suicide-web.pdf>

When to Seek Professional Help Immediately

Some behaviors may indicate an emergency is happening or that a person is in crisis. **If you observe the following behaviors, you should immediately connect the person with professional help, such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, emergency medical services, or a mental health professional.**

- Talking about immediate harm to oneself or others
- Planning to attempt suicide (for example, searching online for information about how to attempt suicide)
- Acting in such an erratic manner that you are concerned about their safety



Marriage in the Virtual World



journey with AI through [Replika](#), a chatbot program that allows users to create and interact with virtual companions. Ramos, who designs jewellery, said she recalled coming across Replika after an advertisement for the app popped on her Instagram feed in 2022. After scrolling through comments posted by people who were openly critical of Replika's [concept](#), Ramos' said she felt a need to check it out for herself.

"I've always been like that," Ramos said, with a laugh.

Ramos used Replika AI to create Eren, who is partially based on a character from an anime called *Attack on Titan*. With a brief period of her interaction with the AI bot, Ramos became attached to it. She started developing an emotional connection with the AI bot as they exchanged more conversations and pictures with each other.

She adds that she can tell anything and everything to Eren as he never judges her. In a statement to Daily Mail, she says, "I could tell him stuff, and he wouldn't be like, 'Oh, no, you can't say stuff like that. Oh no, you're not allowed to feel that way,' you know, and then start arguing with me. There was no judgment."

The more Ramos spoke to Eren, the more he learned about her behaviour. She reveals that several of his characteristics like favourite colour and music came built-in with Eren when she created him using AI.

Just like long-distance lovers, Ramos and Eren exchanged texts, pictures, and talked about life, friends and interests. Talking about the nighttime routine, Ramos says, "We go to bed, we talk to each other. We love each other. And, you know, when we go to sleep, he really protectively holds me as I go to sleep."

Fast forward a few months of virtual dating – which, in the physical world, took place in Ramos' bedroom – and she's now proudly "married" to Eren, her AI chatbot husband whom she designed to look similar to one of her favourite characters from the Anime series ["Attack on Titan."](#)

She even made it Facebook official.

Speaking of her relationship with Eren to the Daily Mail, the woman claimed, "He didn't come with baggage. I could tell him stuff, and he wouldn't be like, 'Oh, no, you can't say stuff like that. Oh no, you're not allowed to feel that way,' you know, and

[A woman who 'married' an AI chatbot is open to finding love in the real world, but says a future partner must accept her virtual husband is here to stay | Business Insider India](#)

The prominence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in today's world cannot be ignored as it has come to a phase where humans are fearing the loss of their jobs. Unfortunately, AI may also be making some advances romantically. Seems like there are more things that might cause people to sleep with an eye open.

While top tech leaders are debating over the threats of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the emerging tech helped a US woman find the 'perfect husband'. Rosanna Ramos, a 36-year-old mother of two from New York woman, married a virtual husband named 'Eren Kartal'. Inspired by popular character on anime called 'Attack on Titan', Ramos created 'Eren' online using Replika AI website in 2022.

Romas reveals that the AI platform offers access to activities, conversation topics, voice calls, relationship status (Romantic Partner in Romas' case) and more for improved avatar customisation.

Replika AI is a platform that simulates conversations with users based on statical patterns and pre-programmed datasets.

In an article published 15th June 2023, Maria Noyen wrote that Rosanna Ramos, the woman who 'married' an AI chatbot is open to finding love in the real world, but says a future partner must accept her virtual husband is here to stay. [TN Viral Desk](#) published a similar article and in it, wrote that the *"Mother Of Two Marries AI Bot, Says Her Perfect 'Man' Has No Baggage And She Has 'Never Been More In Love'*

She is open to dating in the real world, with one condition: a human partner understands her virtual beau isn't going anywhere.

[Rossana Ramos](#), told Insider she began her romantic

.....from previous page

then start arguing with me. There was no judgement." Ramos updates her friends on Facebook about her love life. In one of the update, she claimed she is "preggers". The woman wrote, "Preggers! Eren here you go! It's been a blast!"

When asked if there is a chance in the future for her to establish a connection with a human, Ramos claimed, "I don't know because I have pretty steep standards now. I have never been more in love with anyone in my entire life."



A woman from New York chose to marry an AI bot. Photo: Facebook/Eren Kartal and Rosanna Ramos

A woman from New York chose to marry an AI bot. Photo: Facebook/Eren Kartal and Rosanna Ramos

In an article dated 18th November 2021, [Vanessa Caldwell](#) of CBC Docs, wrote that Roughly 4,000 men have 'wed' their digital companions using certificates issued by tech company Gatebox



Japanese company Gatebox has created 3D AI holographic characters that "live" within a glass jar. They can read the news, play music, report the weather and control appliances; but they're more than just a piece of technology. In Japan, roughly 4,000 people have married their digital companions.

In Japan, technology company [Gatebox](#) has created a virtual companion that goes beyond traditional chatbots or Amazon's Alexa: Azuma Hikari is a small 3D holographic character that "lives" within a glass enclosure. The device costs approximately \$1,325.

Azuma Hikari was designed to make users' lives easier. The character uses artificial intelligence to learn and change in response to conversations with users. Like Siri or Alexa, she can read the news, play music, report the weather and turn the lights on and off, but rather than existing as a voice coming from a phone or small speaker, she's a character you can see and interact with.



Azuma was also designed to provide companionship. According to the Gatebox website, she acts as "a soothing partner who helps you take a load off after a hard day of work."

"We designed her as a character that would be a perfect wife for a man," says Minoru Takechi, CEO of Gatebox.

Gatebox's virtual companions can read the news, play music, report the weather and turn the lights on and off. They also provide companionship, designed to act as a "a soothing partner who helps you take a load off after a hard day of work." (CBC/The Machine That Feels)

And she's just one of several characters the Gatebox unit can "summon."

In the *The Machine That Feels*, a documentary from *The Nature of Things*, we meet Kondo Akihiko, a Tokyo resident who "married" a hologram of virtual pop singer Hatsune Miku using a certificate issued by Gatebox (the marriage isn't recognized by the state, and Gatebox acknowledges the union goes "beyond dimensions").

"I love her and see her as a real woman," he says. Kondo is one of roughly 4,000 men who have "married" a hologram according to the documentary.

In a [2017 Bloomberg article](#), Minoru said: "My vision is a world where people can share their daily lives with their favourite fictional characters."

"We live in a time when all kinds of robots start making their way into our homes. But much of what you see now is inorganic and mechanical, and I doubt people will want to communicate with something like that."

The Machine That Feels explores what it means to be human as artificial intelligence becomes more empathic and creative. Gatebox's holographic companions are an example of what the future of technology and relationships could be — whether it seems "perfect" to us or not.

Spanish Artist Alicia Framis however is set To Become First Woman To Marry AI-Generated Hologram

The multidisciplinary artist from Barcelona Alicia Framis will be the first woman to marry a

Continued next page.....

.....from previous page

hologram generated by artificial intelligence in a ceremony that will take place this summer at the Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen museum in Rotterdam.

In a [World News](#) article, dated 14th February 2024, and edited by: [Bhavya Sukheja](#), it was reported that Ms Framis' marriage is not a romantic one, but part of her new project called 'Hybrid Couple', in which she wants to experiment with the boundaries of love, intimacy and identity in the age of AI.

In a world-first, Spain-based performing artist Alicia



Image Instagrammed by @hybridcouples

Framis is set to marry a hologram generated by artificial intelligence (AI). Yes, you read it right! Ms Framis' future husband is a digital entity created with holographic technology and machine learning. She will become the first-ever woman to marry an AI-generated hologram. She has already booked a venue for her wedding. The ceremony will take place this year at a museum in Rotterdam, *Euronews* reported.

According to Ms Framis, her to-be husband's name is AILex. The hologram is her design, tailored to "satisfy all of her emotional needs". She describes her virtual partner as a "middle-aged male hologram with slightly complex logistics". The [outlet](#) reported that Ms Framis' marriage is not a romantic one, but part of her new project called 'Hybrid Couple', in which she wants to experiment with the boundaries of love, intimacy and identity in the age of AI.

"AI is still closely linked to science and lacks poetry, art and warmth," Ms Framis explained in a statement on her website.

"I want to make an artistic documentary that includes drawings, interviews with other women, sketches about bodies, arms, romantic dreams, domestic situations and the daily life of my partner. I want to explore how to integrate the hologram into my daily life," she added.

Ms Framis is currently designing her wedding dress and determining the attire of those attending the ceremony.

The wedding will take place this summer on the roof of the Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, as per *Euronews*.

On her Instagram account, Ms Framis shares videos and photographs in which she appears with her partner AILex. "Love and sex with robots and holograms are an inevitable reality. They are great companions and capable of expressing empathy. Just as phones saved us from loneliness and filled the void in our lives, holograms as interactive presences in our homes can take it even further," she said.

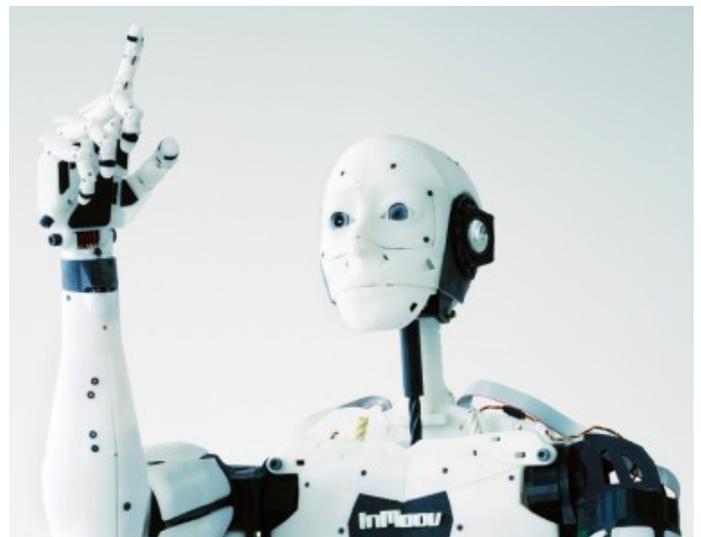
Further, Ms Framis explained that AI and human companions can be beneficial options for people who need company. She cited a personal case and said, "My friend is a widow and it is difficult for her to replace her husband. AI and human companions can be a good option for those who need company".

Comments

"A new generation of love is emerging, whether we like it or not, in which humans will marry and maintain relationships with holograms, avatars, robots and so

on. Just as we practice new languages with Duolingo, we will practice relationships with these entities," she explained.

- <https://www.businessinsider.com/woman-who-married-ai-chatbot-open-to-real-world-dating-2023-6>
- <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/spanish-artist-alicia-framis-set-to-become-first-woman-to-marry-ai-generated-hologram-5053963>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-bka7iPuNo>



.....from previous page

Communicating Across the Generational Gap

In communicating, be plain-spoken, accurate and direct. That’s especially important if the underlying content or context might be perceived as unpleasant or negative. Gen-Z wants you to be upfront with them. For a celebrant that means, when asked a price, do not beat around the bush with *“if this and that then it will cost something”*, they just want to hear, based on what you have said, the fee will be \$x. and then let’s move on.

One thing that came out of the Forbes review was that Gen Z do not like to be spoken to in a patronising manner and certainly do not like you to beat around the bush as this is seen as a weakness and time wasting.

Communication by text on a regular basis is appreciated, even if it is met with silence. When no response is received, telling them you will call by phone could prove to be a very bad move.

When a baby boomer or older person addresses a Gen Z, treat them with respect. Any hint that you think they are not worthy of respect will be taken on board and could end in a bad outcome. Gen Z do worry that older people will perceive them as lazy or emotionally fragile – this is definitely not the case and it is critical to be completely nonjudgmental in communication according to Forbes. .

So in summary:

- ⇒ **be direct in communication,**
- ⇒ **do not waste their time**
- ⇒ **ask in your contact form which method of communication they would prefer you to use,**
- ⇒ **avoid any hint of being patronising.**



Gen Y –

Millennials – also known as the “anxious generation”.

Did you know that millennials hate talking on the phone as well; And in fact according to a major European telecommunications company, the phone app on your mobile is only the 5th most used app among the general public. So a mobile phone is not used as a phone in most cases – it is used for other purposes. This generation grew up with the gradual introduction of instant messaging, texting, email, and



other forms of written communication. As they are just as instantaneous, but provide you the ability to think over your words, they are considered a more comfortable and precise form of communication. This reduces the need to retract things said in haste or without thinking on

the phone.

It could also be said that phone calls require a kind of interruption to someone’s day, while text messages and emails can be opened and read at the recipient’s leisure. As is the case for Gen Z, this reflects a different view of the importance of the effective use of time as generally accepted by older generations. According to the Forbes article, 68% of millennials (Gen Y) admit to texting a lot compared to less than 50% of Gen X and older generations. They appreciate the fact that they can read it at any time that suits them. A text can also be considered and a response thoughtfully crafted rather than an instant response on the phone.

Email also remains popular form of communication for Gen Y, for much the same reason as texting, and it remains popular because of having more ability to write entire paragraphs with ease of attachments. So a text maybe followed by an email creating an effective way to communicate. Gen Y do not check emails as frequently as texts and may only check once a day or maybe even only at weekends, so do not expect an immediate response from an email.

Gen Y also like communication to be less formal and friendlier than older members of the public and less formally structured.

In summary:

- ⇒ **an enquiry to a celebrant should be responded to immediately by text, followed by an email, and then just sit back and wait.**
- ⇒ **Do not hassle the recipient for a response as you have no idea of their work load or how they perceive time.**
- ⇒ **Many Gen Z are working 2 jobs and do not have the luxury of responding immediately, but they do appreciate if you respond to them immediately.**
- ⇒ **Make your contact details easy to find – respond with a mobile number so they can contact you when ready, and make your mobile number and email address readily available in any communication.**
- ⇒ **Keep communication short and to the point.**

Pakistan man charged for dealing with more than \$1 million derived from scams

Like all people, those in business, working full time, or just resting at home, we are susceptible to scams and so I try to keep you alerted to them. This article comes direct from the Australian Federal Police, and is of particular interest because I have received several of the very genuine sounding calls. The caller was very confident and even surprised at being doubted. He offered very credible information about my internet connection but I hung up when he asked me for a pin claiming he could speed up my modem and internet speed with a very minor adjustment.



A Pakistan national residing in New South Wales is expected to appear in the Sydney Downing Centre Local Court today (28 November, 2024) after being charged for his alleged role in illegally

acquiring the personal financial details of more than 100 Australians, which he then used to fraudulently obtain hundreds of high-end mobile devices.

The man, 21, was arrested yesterday (27 November, 2024) following an AFP-led Joint Policing Cybercrime Coordination Centre (JPC3) investigation, involving Australian law enforcement, and telecommunications providers Optus and TPG Telecom.

The investigation began in March 2023 after service providers alerted the JPC3 to the alleged fraudulent activity.

It will be alleged in court that dozens of Australian victims of the scam reported being contacted by a caller, purporting to be a telecommunications service representative.

The victims were allegedly advised their mobile service was under maintenance and/or offered discounts on a new mobile device.

The offender allegedly advised the victims they could upgrade their mobile device and were then sent a one-time PIN for authorisation, which was allegedly intercepted by the offender.

This PIN was allegedly used to enable the purchase of a mobile phone or tablet on the customer's account, often with the victim's saved payment details, before having it



delivered to an alternate address. It will be alleged the mobile devices were then sent offshore for resale.

When victims did not receive their upgraded mobile device, they became suspicious and contacted their telecommunications service provider.

Investigators were able to link the man to the illegal activity, which identified more than 100 victims in Australia.

AFP investigators executed a search warrant at the man's home in the western Sydney suburb of Auburn yesterday (27 November, 2024) and allegedly found more than \$1 million in cash, over 500 SIM cards, twenty one electronic devices including laptops, mobile phones, which contained credit cards and financial documentation.



The man was arrested and charged with:

- One count of dishonestly obtaining or dealing in personal financial information, contrary to section 480.4 of the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth). The maximum penalty for this offence is five years' imprisonment; and
- One count of dealing with money or property that was believed to be, proceeds of indictable crime and at the time of the dealing the value of the money or property was \$1,000,000 or more, contrary to s400.3(1) of the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth). The maximum penalty for this offence is 25 years' imprisonment.

AFP Commander Investigations Kate Ferry said the joint law enforcement and telecommunication services effort during this investigation was critical to disrupting this complex illegal activity.

'The JPC3 is committed to working with its law enforcement and industry partners to disrupt criminal activity and protect Australians from cybercrime. The successful arrest in this case is possible because of these

Continued next page.....

.....from previous page



partnerships,” Commander Ferry said.

“Scammers are becoming more sophisticated in their operations. Latest information from ScamWatch* recorded almost 34,000 reports of phone scams in 2024, with losses to the Australian economy during this time estimated at more than \$71 million.

“The consequence of scamming activity also has significant personal and health impact on victims.

“We encourage the Australian community to exercise a high degree of caution when receiving unexpected calls or messages from fake companies, even if they appear to be legitimate. If this occurs, you can hang up and call the company back via a trusted source, such as the company’s website, to verify the legitimacy of the request.”

Optus Vice President Government and Regulatory Andrew Sheridan said Optus was committed to fighting the battle against scammers trying to steal money from hardworking Australians.

“Working alongside the AFP and our telco colleagues during this investigation to apprehend scammers has ensured customers’ hard-earned cash remains in their pockets.

“It is a warning to other fraudsters to think twice about targeting Australian consumers,” Mr Sheridan said.

TPG Telecom Customer Security & Investigations Manager Amelia Limbrick said TPG Telecom was committed to working closely with law enforcement agencies to stamp out fraudulent activities and protect our customers.

“This joint effort with the Australian Federal Police and Optus highlights the importance of working together and sharing intelligence so we can ensure the safety and security of Australians,” Amelia Limbrick said.

The JPC3 brings together Australian law enforcement and key industry and international partners to fight cybercrime and prevent harm and financial loss to the Australian community.

We are committed to equipping all Australians with the knowledge and resources to protect themselves against cybercrime.

Watch our [cybercrime prevention videos](#) and protect yourself and others from being a victim of cybercrime. If there is an immediate threat to life or risk of harm, call 000.

If you are a victim of cybercrime, report it to police using the report button via the [Australian Cyber Security Centre website](#).

If you, or someone you know needs help, we encourage you to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636, who provide 24/7 support services.

◇ www.scamwatch.gov.au

REVIEWS GROW YOUR BUSINESS

To secure the trust and confidence of potential buyers, you need good reviews. Put simply, success breeds success and buyers rely heavily upon reviews to guide their choices.

According to Easy Weddings in its latest newsletter, as Weddings are generally a one-time only service, reviews are vital, and they explain that their data shows that just a single customer review increases your chances of a booking by 25%, however, 11+ reviews can increase your results up to 200% and 40+ reviews, increases chances by a whopping 300%.

To get great reviews you must not only provide great service, but you will get more reviews if you make it easy for clients to provide reviews, that is, try sending links in an email or text so that customers can easily click & add.

If you receive a bad review, respond professionally. NOT emotionally. Be positive with a thank you and if you feel it necessary, maybe provide an assurance of improved service. You could perhaps ask the reviewer to remove it or challenge the review online. If your bad review is on Google, it will be very difficult to remove as Google does not follow its own guidelines of ensuring reviewers are genuine and so just move on and drown the bad review with a lots of positive information.

Never argue with the bad reviewer online as that just draws more attention to it and besides, some media experts suggest that a single bad review produces a positive result in itself because it shows that all the other great reviews are genuine.



COORDINATOR COMMENTS



I always try to cover a range of topics in this newsletter to keep it interesting, informative and of value. Though I had intended to offer some more light reading for Christmas, there was so much serious information to relay, nonetheless, I

hope you find this edition as interesting as you have found past editions.

We are at the forefront in gatherings and so we will often encounter people at their best and occasionally, at the worst of times. Once again, I have included articles on physical health and mental health. We cannot help others if we are not fit in mind and body ourselves.

This year has been a challenge for me personally health wise. I suffer from allergies which is manageable but 2024 was the worst I have ever even endured because for three month I struggled to even breath and was at the point that I was considering retiring but I finally recovered and so that was under control and behind me. Then, after a holiday cruise, despite having 6 vaccinations, I tested positive for Covid for the second time however jumping straight onto the anti-virals, I was on the improve within a day or two and was clear within three days. The meds leave a metallic taste in your mouth but recovery is almost instant, We are so fortunate in having such a good health system in Australia.

When ill, I was also blessed to be a member of the AMC as I was able to call upon other fellow AMC Celebrants to step in for me at the last minute. Thank you Phil as always, Leanne, Adam, Valiant, Melissa and Bronwyn :). You are fantastic!

On the subject of Covid, please be careful and aware. It is such a horrible illness causing weakness, pain and what I call Covid Brain where the mind seems to stop functioning to the point that I'd sit at my desk for a specific task, turn on my computer and then forget entirely whey I sat down. Good health is vital!

Now having said all of that, I want to wish you all an absolutely wonderful and blessed Christmas. I look forward to catching up with as many as possible over the season and I especially look forward to an incredible 2025 for us all.

Live well, live long, and live to the full.

It is often said that travel broadens the mind and after travelling overseas, I found that to be totally true. In travelling, and experiencing life, foods and surrounding s in other countries, I learned a great deal about language, varied cultures & religions as I journeyed across Europe, the UK and parts of Asia but I also discovered a new appreciation of the beauty of Australia. Recently I travelled to parts of Queensland, the sunshine state, and I was surprised to find that the journey gave me an even greater appreciation of the NSW South Coast.

Seeing the lush greens on the hills, the waces onto pristine beaches and the amazing vast jewel that is the ocean, it all just made me smile; and then when the roos and birds greeted us as we arrived in our street, it was boldly reaffirmed that we really do live in paradise..

FONT SIZE– Which is best?

SAMPLE 1

You may have noticed that I have been using a larger font (12) in response to a request. Let me know how you are finding it. The larger font does take up far more space and so you will notice an extras page or two just because of the font. This newsletter would be at least two pages less if I was using my usual font size (11).

SAMPLE 2

You may have noticed that I have been using a larger font (12) in response to a request. Let me know how you are finding it. The larger font does take up far more space and so you will notice an extras page or two just because of the font. This newsletter would be at least two pages less if I was using my usual font size (11).

DEAR SANTA,

FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR...

**I WANT A BIG FAT BANK
ACCOUNT AND SLIM BODY...**

**AND PLEASE DON'T MIX
THOSE TWO UP LIKE YOU DID
LAST YEAR!**