

February 2025

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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.



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.



AUSTRALIAN
MARRIAGE
CELEBRANTS
INC

REFORMATION



While all this was occurring, Fair Trading approved a postponement of the 2024 AGM into early 2025 to enable the needed time for action.

A committee meeting is pending to approve the new Policies and Procedures and to set a date of the AGM which will soon be announced.

The term of office for all current committee members will expire at that AGM and a new exciting committee is to be elected.

Nominations will soon be open and so it is time to consider what talent, skills and fresh ideas YOU can bring to the AMC committee, to lead the AMC into the future.

Have you the skills and aspiration to be the new President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary or a general committee member? Each plays a vital role in the growth and direction of the AMC.

Which will you nominate for?

In keeping with the new constitution, training and inductions are being prepared for all nominated candidates.

It is exciting to know that the new committee will not be burdened by the past but that the new committee will have a clean slate to begin a new and greater era in the history of the AMC.

This is your time, so let's make it truly wonderful.

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After a group of AMC members attempted to take control of the AMC, last year, the members rallied and strongly objected. The small group resigned and what followed was a period of reflection and reformation.

Consideration and priority was given to strengthening the AMC, making it more resilient, compliant, and better able to support its members. New committee members stepped up, the old constitution was reviewed and a new and far better constitution was written with the support and approval of the vast majority of members.

Other steps included the appointment of a new Public Officer, a complete review of Policies and Procedures, and just as importantly, the dumping of the old website which was found to be faulty.

The new website is still a work in progress but has a far better appearance and superior SEO without the inherent faults of the old outdated site.

In the reformation process there were other areas that required attention including locating financial reports, a review of expenditure and the creation of a financial plan, addressing compliance issues, reviewing insurances, and auditing assets.



**Cover Photo
Christmas 2024 South
Coast meeting**



After several names changes, AMC was incorporated 30 years ago and so this is sure to be a big year.

The Australian Marriage Celebrants Incorporated, (AMC) is an Association that provides benefits and support for marriage celebrants in Australia as well as connecting couples to Celebrants while promoting Civil Celebrancy nationally and internationally.

Joining this professional marriage celebrant association gives access to valuable support, resources, insurances, and networking opportunities. There is even access and support for Student Celebrants.

Being a part of AMC enhances your professional standing and development, helps you stay connected with the industry, and enables access to relevant information and guidance for your celebrant work.

Australian Marriage Celebrants (AMC) celebrants are not just experienced professionals who can provide valuable assistance to each other and to couples in creating and planning the perfect marriage ceremony but mentor upcoming and new Celebrants.

Members have diverse expertise and collaborate to create and bring ideas to life. AMC has valuable resources, educational materials, and a strong community network to encourage and enhance Celebrant knowledge and professionalism.

The monthly education sessions are free to members and are exceptional, but there is also support via dedicated Facebook pages, newsletters and of course via Regional Coordinators.

When I was ill, or couldn't travel, AMC members stepped up immediately to help out. I have been able to refer ceremonies to others and it has been reciprocated. If I have a problem with equipment or a ceremony I know I can get help. I have referred about 6 Ceremonies in past months. What a great community of Celebrants we have! **Lou Szymkow**

Membership benefits:

- Both Professional indemnity & Public Liability Insurance
- CAL Copyright Protection
- Full profile page on the AMC website
- Website Business Promotion
- Celebrant Support Forums
- Social media pages to promote our members
- Free monthly online education sessions for members
- Access to regional coordinators Australia-wide
- Resources, guidelines, templates, and other materials
- Networking and Community
- Advocacy and Representation
- Professional Recognition
- Representation to the Coalition of Celebrant Associations (CoCA)
- Representation to the Attorney General via MLCS Meeting

Twice this week, I have reached out to knowledgeable and knowing people and they have both gone above and beyond to assist.

I have an upcoming Wedding in an area Lou knows well. He not only provided me with answers, but sent links to information and phoned to help further. He was very helpful with his great knowledge of the area, issues with tides and I was able to pass all this information to my couple.

A selfless and appreciated gesture with my deep gratitude to you, Lou.

The second assistance this week.

I have just held a Marriage in the ACT and I reached out to the wonderful Eileen Dunstone, after trying to research how to register my Couple.

Eileen from the ACT talked me through the process and explained the next steps to expect. I really appreciated her taking my call and explaining everything so very well.

Leanne McKay

AMC COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

This is an AMC Constitution extract outlining the Committee composition & roles.

18. Functions of the Committee

It is the duty of all Committee Members to carry out their functions for the benefit of AMC with due care and diligence and without conflict/s of interest, perceived or otherwise.

Subject to the Act, the Regulation, this Constitution, the Objects, Code of Conduct, AMC Policies and procedures and any resolution passed by AMC in general meeting, the volunteer committee:

- a) is to control and manage the affairs of AMC and
- b) actively maintain an AMC conflicts of interest register and
- c) may exercise all the functions other than a function that is required by this Constitution to be exercised by an AMC general meeting and
- d) ensures that no Executive or Committee Member or Celebrant Member transacts any business on behalf of AMC that has not been delegated in writing by the Committee and
- e) has power to do all things that are necessary for the proper management of AMC affairs and
- f) must ensure that all AMC Policies are reviewed and transparent to Members in accordance with the **AMC Policies and Procedures Policy** and
- g) shall ensure that any confidential Association matters are handled with diplomacy and in line with **Committee Confidentiality and associated policies**
- h) shall meet a minimum of four (4) times each year, or more often if required and
- i) must transact its business by the circulation of agendas and business papers to all Committee Members with due notice.

19. Composition of the Committee

AMC shall be managed by a **Committee** comprising of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and at least three (3) but no more than seven (7) other Celebrant Members.

The **Executive** shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

A Member cannot hold two Executive positions concurrently unless one of the positions is not filled at the AGM or becomes vacant mid-term. A vacant Executive position must be filled as soon as possible and may only be held in an acting capacity by a Committee Member for a maximum of 6 months. A Member holding an Executive position and acting in an interim role, is only entitled to one vote per motion.

If a Member is absent for an extended period (up to 4 months), then a Committee Member can act in their capacity but is only entitled to one vote per motion.

An Executive Member can only hold the same Executive position for a maximum of two concurrent terms (four years). If no one nominates for the Executive position after the four-year period, then the preceding Executive Member can be re-appointed at the AGM.

The Committee may appoint a Celebrant Member to fill a casual Committee vacancy.

21. Roles of Committee Members

In addition to the *Clause 18 – Functions of the Committee*, the duties of the Committee Members are as follows:

President

The role of the President is to:

- a) manage and chair AMC Committee and general meetings (except AGM elections), prioritise agenda items; set time limits, lead the meeting through the agenda; note any motions and amendments (with the Secretary); and put these to vote as required.
- b) ensure with other Committee Members, that the Constitution, Act, Regulations, Objects, Code of Conduct, policies and procedures and any other funding and/or agreements that the AMC has agreed to, are met and upheld.
- c) be a Member of sub-committees as required and
- d) act as the AMC spokesperson or appoint an approved nominee/s to act as spokesperson/s.

Secretary

The role of the Secretary, or nominated delegate, is to ensure that all records of Association business including the Constitution, correspondence, agendas and minutes of all Committee meetings, AGMs, Special General and General Meetings and sub-committees are accurately recorded, properly actioned, filed electronically and managed as a permanent record.

Minutes must be kept in written or electronic form and made available to Celebrant Members in accordance with Clause 35.

Vice-President

The role of the Vice-President is to assist the President and other Committee Members as required. The Vice-President is to preside as chairperson at each Committee or General Meeting in the absence of the President.

Treasurer

The role of the Treasurer is to ensure that:

- a) all monies received are promptly paid into an AMC account and appropriate receipts issued.
- b) all payments are made via any legal means available and authorised by two signatories who have been approved by the Committee and endorsed on records of the Association's financial institution/s.
- c) that any major or unusual expenditure shall be authorised in advance by the Committee and in accordance with the **AMC Financial Controls Policy** and
- d) ensure that correct records and accounts are kept and updated.

In the absence of the Treasurer from a Committee meeting, the Chairperson may present the financial reports provided by the Treasurer, but the report may not be accepted by the Committee if clarification by the Treasurer is needed.



Letters to the Editor



Dear Lou and Carolyn

I am sharing my personal thanks for the good work of the members of the AMC committee in the planning and updating of the Constitution, Objects and Code of Conduct. The documents are an impressive read and professional in every way.

Thank you to the team for their best endeavours in bringing the AMC to this position.

In response to the call out for Celebrant members to come on board with the workload of the committee, I advise that I have previously spoken to Annemarie McDonnell as to my continuing commitment in volunteering in community service and several committees. My role is President of the Rotary Club of Lower Blue Mountains and I have not had the fortune of a President Elect or a Secretary and have been committed to achieving both committee roles. I have vowed to continue in the role as President also for 2025 - 2026 in the hopes of reducing the workload and enticing participation. This is becoming a common problem with service clubs and an ageing population.

I would not be in a position to lend a hand with the committee work of the AMC at this time and I trust my outline gives you an outline of my current workload. I could see myself though lending a hand with an aspect of the planning of the next conference.

I have been a proud member of the AMC and a Regional Co-ordinator in Western Sydney in past years and have also held committee positions with the FCAA and sub-committees in a PR role with the Funeral Celebrants. Lucky I remain a night owl!

I extend my sincere best wishes to you both and look forward to seeing you online for the Special General Meeting on 8/1/25. Best wishes for a wonderful year to follow.

Pamela Noal CMC DipCel JP
Marriage Celebrant Consultant
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Sent from my iPad

Hi Lou

An email to wish you and yours a very joyful Xmas and brightest blessings for a wonderful 2025. P/s Keep up the fantastic work you do for our industry-it is much appreciated.

Barry H Young

Just wanted to wish you & yours all the best for Christmas & the coming year. Thanks heaps for the best Newsletters & for all you do (&are doing) behind the scenes for AMC - I certainly appreciate it & we keep needing to raise the bar!!!! Best wishes, keep well.& enjoy my favourite part of the world!!!(I'll get there one day??)

Warmly Di McDonald 🌟🌟🌟

Dear Lou,

Thank you so much for your email of 26 April 2024. Please accept our sincere apologies for our delayed response - it has certainly been a busy and productive year.

We really appreciate the feedback you regularly provide to us and would like to thank you for this positive response to the 2024 compulsory professional development. We strive to provide celebrants with useful and comprehensive activities each year and are always pleased when they are received positively.

We take this opportunity to wish you the very best for the festive season.

If you have any queries in relation to any of the matters outlined in this email, please contact us at marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au or if urgent, on 1800 550 343 (Tuesday to Thursday, 10am-12.30pm and 1-4pm Canberra local time).

The Marriage Law and Celebrants Section (MLCS) will be unavailable from midday 24 December 2024 to 1 January 2025 (inclusive) and will not be responding to any enquiries over this shutdown period. MLCS will be back in the office on 2 January 2025.

Kind regards,

Marriage Law and Celebrants Section

Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Thank you for your amazing newsletter, I am going to print it and get a nice coffee and have a good read when I have a quiet moment when all the family have left after Christmas.

I want to say a big thank you for your support and humour over this past year in AMC, your common sense prevails and that is what was required.

Dally Messenger III

REFLECTIONS ON WORKING AT NSW REGISTRY OF BIRTHS DEATHS & MARRIAGES

by Sharon Swinbourne



When I began my new job as PA to the Registrar (Trevor Stacey) of NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages in August 1998, the Registry was a very different organisation to what it is now. Of course, it is natural and necessary for organisations to grow, change and evolve over the years, and this is certainly the case for BDM. However, some changes don't always bring about improvement, and I believe there has been a huge decline in customer service since the introduction of Service NSW. This is not a reflection on BDM staff or Service NSW staff. It is a reflection on the state government and their lack of insight into the ramifications and problems some changes cause.

The "one stop shop" concept works well for some things, but it falls down if a customer has a unique situation that needs to be discussed with a qualified officer. Service NSW staff cannot be expected to know about every nuance that can occur when providing such a big range of services. The results can be negative for customers when provided with incorrect information and long waiting times. This is particularly true for BDM customers, including civil celebrants and funeral directors.

So what is different now to when I worked there? There were no ID tags. There were no restricted areas for staff. Certificate paper was not securely stored, nor did it have a bar code. There was a telephone room staffed by operators who took calls and transferred customers to real people to discuss their issues. The mail was opened by staff on a roster system. All the applications were pinned together in a certain way with the cheques or money orders attached. They would then be sent to the relevant sections for processing and receipting the payment. The red registers were kept on the premises and anyone could go and look up information (which was a huge breach of privacy).

Unlike now, a customer could come to the Registry, apply for a certificate and walk out with it in their hands. Urgent applications would often be processed on the spot or within 24 hours. Customers could attend in person if they needed assistance. They could call the Registry to make enquiries about the status of an application or to find out general information.

Those wishing to change their name were interviewed by experienced officers. There were so many processes put in place during my time to improve security and ensure that those changing their name had valid reasons. When I first began at BDM, a person could change their name every three months. This practice was an open invitation for criminals to continue with illegal activities or hide from law enforcement; for tax evaders and other people who were changing their name for nefarious reasons. By 2014, a person could only change their name once every 12 months or three times in total, although there were exceptions for people who were in domestic violence situations and some other circumstances. This didn't apply for those in protective custody. These name changes were carried out by the Federal Police and records was closed to staff.

An additional 21 conditions for change of name were legislated 1996 to further tighten up the process. As a matter of interest, we prosecuted 8 criminals – including paedophiles – who were all charged with the offence of providing false information regarding their criminal history when applying to change their name.

Records in registers were all digitised in 1999. I think every British and Irish back packer living in Sydney at the time were temps for this project.

Also in 1999, paper death registrations were phased out. Legislation was enacted compelling all NSW funeral directors to register deaths electronically. This was not well received by some funeral directors, but they calmed down eventually. They did stop bringing gifts at Easter and Christmas though. The Team Leader of Death Registrations was a lovely man who gave himself the title Manager of Underground Accommodation.

Later civil marriage celebrants register online if they chose to, but the process was very slow because the system was so old. This was frustrating for celebrants and it became much easier to send off the paperwork to BDM for registration.

Registry marriages were conducted every day, including Friday night and Saturday. Becoming a weekend Registry marriage celebrant (which meant overtime) was simple. Watch a couple of weddings during the week, study the script (which was the same for every wedding) and then conduct a wedding under the watchful eye of the Senior Marriage Officer. Once she was satisfied your skills were up to scratch, you were included on the roster. A weekend shift consisted of up to

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6 services on Friday night and up to 18 on a Saturday. It is very exhausting reciting the same words 18 times in one day. Many couples were from other cultures so pronunciation of names could be a challenge. There was no time to practice! When the Registry was located in Thomas Street, the man who owned the camera and film shop across the street was often asked to act as an interpreter because he could speak Mandarin and Cantonese!

In 2000, the Registry relocated to Regent Street. The big red registers were sent to the government records repository at Kingswood where, for the first time, they would be kept in secure flood and fireproof storage. It cost \$80 to retrieve a record from the repository. Around 2010, microfiche records were also digitised. Everyone was very happy to see the microfiche machine leave the building!

Before posting, all certificates were checked against applications for errors. If an error was missed, the customer could return the certificate showing the errors and a replacement would be sent within a few days of receiving the incorrect one.

In 2004, Greg Curry became the Registrar after Trevor Stacey retired. After a few incidents with the public, security officers were employed. All staff had ID tags with swipes and the public has limited access. Marriage certificates provided to couples at their wedding now had bar codes and were accountable documents. Certificate paper became more secure and were now kept in locked printers which needed a code to print a certificate. Access to the print room was restricted.

Processing times were carefully monitored every week, with the priority being birth, death and marriage certificates, as this was our core business. If processing times exceeded the five day mark, the Registrar would be on to the Assistant Registrars demanding to know why. Change of name was usually around 10 days, with amendments between 5-10 days. Eventually emails became part of our regular communication with customers, and these were answered immediately in most cases.

The Registry was and still is a self-funding organisation. No funding is received from the government for operations. At the end of each financial year the Attorney General's Department would advise how much the Registry would hand over. Whatever was left was the budget for everything – salaries, oncosts, utilities, maintenance, supplies and equipment. All certificate prices are determined by Parliament. The only discretionary fees the Registry could charge were for marriages and transfer fees for Notices of Intended Marriage.

The dynamics of the Registry began to change around

2005. The Attorney General's Department had relocated to Parramatta where a new BDM office was opened. Couples could now choose between two venues. The western suburbs were booming and now customers were able to attend the Parramatta office instead of having to come into the city. The new marriage room was bright and airy and overlooked a lovely garden.

It was very clear the Registry needed a new registration system. Greg Curry was instrumental in exploring and developing the new system. This was a huge undertaking because this concept had never been implemented anywhere else in the world. A competition was conducted to see who could come up with the best name for the project. And so LifeLink was born.

For the next nine years, we were constantly being told "LifeLink" is coming. Spending on anything except LifeLink was frowned upon. It seemed like most Registry funds were being set aside for the development of this new system. I am not going to explore the whole process but needless to say it was very long and very stressful for staff and managers. Originally there were four phases of implementation proposed, but only one ever came to fruition. And that phase cost A LOT of money.

I retired in 2014 as I didn't want to go through the stress of the implementation, which as it turned out, was a very good decision. It was time to hand over the reigns to someone who was more enthusiastic than me about this new system. The Registry was starting to branch out in the marriage industry (this is a whole other story which I have explained in a paper I have written). I left BDM in May 2014. It was both a sad and happy day for me. I then completed by training as a civil marriage and funeral celebrant under the guidance of the wonderful Keith Lammond.

I will always be grateful for the friends I have made and the skills I learnt working at the Registry. But it is so different now. A once vibrant organisation has been swallowed up by bureaucracy. Once upon a time a customer could walk out of the Registry with their certificate or have their questions answered by trained and qualified staff. Civil celebrants could speak to staff about the status of a certificate or registration. Processing times were monitored and were kept at a reasonable level. None of these things happen now. Maybe I'm just old fashioned but how is that an improvement in customer service?

BDM Process for Preparing & Printing a Certificate in 1998

By Sharon Swinbourne

The relevant record of marriage was found in the marriage register.

Other entries on the page were covered with paper and a photograph was then taken of the record on the Itek machine, which was like a huge camera. Itek machines were also designed to view microfilm on a large desktop monitor and could produce instant prints from microfilm, using a photographic stabilization process.



The certificate was printed on thick glossy photo paper in landscape. The certificate was folded in three and put into an envelope. An address label was printed, stuck on the envelope and then posted. Each step these actions were carried out by different people.

All the chemicals used for the Itek machine were highly toxic and flammable but that didn't come to light until later on. Imagine if a fire had broken out. All those registers would have been lost forever! Events occurring between 1952 – 1991 were kept on microfiche. Life Data (*the system before LifeLink*) was implemented in 1992 and all new records were manually entered into the system.

Certificates were actually checked by staff for accuracy before they were posted. When the records were all digitised, the Itek machine became redundant (I think it went to a museum) and the long white certificates were no more. Some family historians were horrified and demanded the long white certificates be reinstated but that was never going to happen.

BDM COMPLAINTS ON THE RISE

There have been an increasing number of complaints about the NSW BDM since the transition to Service NSW. Major complaints includes the discontinuance of the Celebrant Help Line, lengthy delays in responding to email queries, extraordinary delays in processing corrections, BDM directly competing with Celebrants at venues, and a lack of training in BDM matters for Service NSW staff. Some Celebrants have taken to writing complaints to their local members. Phil Timbrell did just that when he discovered it would take 10 weeks for a simple correction to be made and at first it appeared that the corrected certificate was posted more quickly than 10 weeks however upon arrival, it was found that the replacement certificate had not been corrected at all.



Gregory Keith Curry



Gregory (Greg) Keith Curry, was the NSW BDM **Registrar for the years 2004 to 2014**.

He was 68 years of age when he passed away on 3 January 2025.

His obituary appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. In it we were told that he was the loved brother of Raymond (deceased), Barry, Ronald and Shirley and brother-in-law to Patricia, Clare, Margaret (deceased) and Peter. Beloved uncle to Philip, Judeth (deceased), Susan, Diane, Donna, Jonathon, Matthew, Julie-Ann, Amy and Meredith, and great-uncle to all their children. Family and friends were invited to attend a memorial service at Grace Funeral Chapel, 61 Great Western Highway, Emu Plains on Wednesday 15th January, and afterwards at the Leonay Golf Club.

Online tributes for him show that apart from his 10 year contribution to the marriage registry, he was also a ballroom dancer, loved movies, was regraded as wise and gentle man, who enjoyed life and company.

There a few a few photos on the next page.

Many Celebrants knew him well, especially those who had previously worked at the NSW BDM. Sharon Swinbourne was one, and she has written an article in his honour.

The Tale of Corey Gerry

By Sharon Swinbourne

Gregory (Greg) Keith Curry, officially became the permanent Registrar in 2004. Greg had worked as an epidemiologist at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and was a senior executive manager at Home Care and the Attorney General's Department.

Greg was my boss from 2005 to 2014. We had many good times, disagreements, bigger disagreements and all the ups and downs that bosses have with staff.

Greg was a shy and introverted person. He was very reserved and quiet. I was sure that Greg had never worked with a group of people like us when he was



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thrown into the mad house that was The Registry. Years later, I asked Greg if it was a huge culture shock and his answer was “um yes”. BDM was in the middle of big changes when Greg arrived and he was instrumental in implementing big changes in the future. This was all new to him too so he was keen to gain as much knowledge about the Registry as he could.

Greg had a very dry sense of humour which not many people saw because of his reserved personality. He had some great sayings including

“never waste a crisis” and “happiness is not the objective”. I didn’t quite understand either until I became a manager. My favourite was “Sharon, you don’t have to attend every war you are invited to”. Very wise words.

Over the years I think we lightened him up and he got to understand us better. When he came to Christmas parties or other functions, he would only stay for an hour or so because he didn’t want anyone to feel like they couldn’t be themselves because the boss was there. I think he also left so he wasn’t present in case any dramas occurred.

One day a customer came to the Registry and demanded to speak to Corey Gerry. When told that no person worked at BDM by that name, she produced a certificate with Greg’s signature as the Registrar and said “yes there is. Look here. He signed my certificate” If anyone ever saw Greg’s signature, it looked a lot like Corey Gerry, which became his name from then on. We even had the Corey Gerry awards at the end of the year. He had no idea of this story or the nickname we had given him until the inaugural awards. I think he secretly liked the fact he had an award named after him!

A few weeks ago, I found out that Greg had passed away on 3 January 2025. He was 68. I was very shocked and saddened by this news. Not a lot of BDM people got to know the real Greg Curry but working with him every day gave me some insights into his personality. We got on well and he was a good boss who always listened and taught me so much.

Rest in pace Corey Gerry. You are part of the history of NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriage.



You were a gentle man, and a gentleman.

WEDDING BLUES OR IS THAT BOOBOOS



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. In this issue, we read about some of Barbara's 'boobos' reminding us that even the best are human afterall.

Never wear skirts when performing a ceremony on a boat

Prepare for everything but be ready for the unexpected..

Over the many years between being registered and retirement I conducted hundreds of weddings. Some are worthwhile remembering, and some are not. Here is a small selection of those that were memorable but not necessarily my greatest of services.

I once became not only the celebrant but the bridesmaid and a first aider. The day dawned happily without any speculation on my part of any complication or drama. Just a run of the mill routine I thought. Sadly it turned out to be not so. I sometimes wonder how best laid plans can become so erratic.

I arrived at the venue early but as usual the bride came late. When she did arrive, she was in no hurry to be wed. Far from it. I think she had had second thoughts so not only was she hesitant, she refused to proceed with the ongoing plan. Then she decided it might be okay and said she would go ahead with the wedding. One thing she was definite about was that she would not carry her bouquet, and that I was to lead the wedding party. So off we went.

Me in front leading the bridal procession carrying the bouquet. Upon reaching the area in which the wedding service was to be held I commenced the service. I looked at the bridegroom -to -be who had turned a nasty shade of green. I asked him *"do you feel alright?"* He with a shaky voice said "no" and proceeded to wilt into a downward slide. I grabbed him by the front of his suit with one hand and with the other I grabbed the nearest chair. I signalled the venue staff to get a



glass of water. They refused so I sent my husband to get the water. The groom took the glass with shaking hands. The water slopped from the glass down the front of his hired suit. I grabbed a handful of tissues from the pack nearby and mopped down his front. However, the tissues left white specks from the tissues like confetti all down the front of his hired suit. Unexpectedly his mother rushed up from the waiting congregation and slapped her son on his back and yelled *"what's the matter with you? Get up and get married"*. He wobblily stood up and the chair fell over with a crash. He joined the bride still shaky and the service recommenced. This time it was the bride's turn to display a fainting episode. She just sat down and asked me to *"hurry up and get this over with. I think I am going to faint"*. I did cut the service short whilst keeping it legal and they signed the necessary papers. I left thankful to be out of the drama. Whether they remained married in the aftermath..... who knows?

It must have been my fate to always have some drama with wedding services. Another bride kept her groom waiting over two and half hours before showing up. This was in the very early days of my celebrancy journey. In the latter times I would not have waited those hours and would have gone home. However, the service was to be held in a venue which was being held on one of the wharfs on Sydney Harbour. When I arrived, the venue was in full swing with a Greek wedding. In the time I waited I watched the entertainment of the Greek crowd and saw both the bride and groom being danced around the floor held on the shoulders of some of the party.

The owner hastened to assure me that there was no other wedding booked there. I insisted and the maître de allowed us in. I was sent to the alternate room to await the bride where the groom and his party were waiting. The bride could not be contacted and so we waitedand we waited.... and we waited. Eventually she turned up and with her bridesmaids and instead of an apology she stood on the wharf outside the room and

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It must have been my fate to always have some drama with wedding services. Another bride kept her groom waiting over two and half hours before showing up. This was in the very early days of my celebrancy journey. In the latter times I would not have waited those hours and would have gone home. However, the service was to be held in a venue which was being held on one of the wharfs on Sydney Harbour. When I arrived, the venue was in full swing with a Greek wedding. In the time I waited I watched the entertainment of the Greek crowd and saw both the bride and groom being danced around the floor held on the shoulders of some of the party.

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.....from previous page

started to light up a cigarette. I went out and asked her to come in so that the service could be started. She refused and kept on smoking. I asked why the party had been so late and she replied that the dress did not fit. I looked more closely to her gown and all down the sides of the dress were safety pins holding it together so that it did fit.

By the time she desultorily entered the room a party of Japanese people who had been booked in, had been ushered to their seats and they were enjoying a feast at one of the tables.

This did not deter my wedding group, and I conducted the wedding. The explanation for this event turned out that the bride and her friends and bridal party had taken advantage of the venue to have a complementary sample wedding feast (which was very popular at the time) and then after a period of time return to the venue for the ceremony. The reason being it would cost her only the celebrant's fee because she had already had the wedding feast. After that It never surprised me the tricks that some brides went to.

I often was asked to do a service on boats. I always wore a pants suit for any venture of this kind after an experience I had with a Georges River boat company. The service went off with any hitches and I asked the Captain to put me off at a certain jetty. His reply was that it was not scheduled and that he would only pull into another jetty further down stream. It was a time before I had a mobile phone so could not contact my husband who was waiting with my car at the original jetty. Down we floated until the jetty the captain decided was what he wanted and then I could disembark. The tide was low, and the jetty was much higher than normal, and from the edge of the land extending onto the river was covered with a layer of rocks so the boat could not get close

to the wharf. It moved somewhat closer to the jetty but as it turned out not close enough. I stood on the gunnels around the boat whilst it manoeuvred until I could reach the wharf.

I threw my brief case onto the jetty and then with one leg on the boat and one leg trying to reach the jetty I held out my hand to my waiting husband who by this time had deduced it would be at the different wharf. What excitement it was for the congregation who were all hanging off the boat watching my efforts to leave. As I attempted to climb up, the boat moved sideways with the tide and I was left astride. One leg on the boat

and the other leg on the wharf.

Eventually I got pulled up most inelegantly and stood on the wharf to wave to the guests. The heel of my shoe got stuck in a hole on the wharf and I fell over sprawling so splendidly on the wharf. What fun for the guests? I was applauded loudly by the laughing group.

TRADITIONS?

MARRIAGE TRADITIONS

Ever wondered why most marriage traditions go back just 500 years? According to the *How Things Work* website, it was not until the 16th Century, during the period of the Protestant Reformation, that Protestants introduced marriage rules that prohibited marriage when of the same blood or to someone in your spouse's family.

The Catholic church then claimed that true marriages required a priest and two witnesses.

This was it seems, the beginning of the church ceremonies for marriage, prohibition of marrying relatives and the introduction of the requirement for two witnesses we still have in use today.

Betrothed Through the Centuries: A Timeline of Marriage | HowStuffWorks

BUSINESS CARD TIP

Business cards kept in a wallet tend to fade or get bent corners but if laminated, seem to last f o r e v e r .

I've had a few requiring lamination lately and rather than waste a full sleeve, if there is space, I fill the space in the sleeve with business cards and can then trim both the laminated item and the individual business cards to leave just a small laminate edge around each. The cards last significantly longer and there is less waste overall.

Also, the laminate sleeves themselves can be purchased at bargain stores for a fraction of what you will pay in a stationery store. My current pack of 100 sleeves cost me about \$12.

NB: Never laminate BDM certificates as they have imbedded heat sensitive security and limitations destroy the security, and so invalidates the certificate.



Barry H. Young writes:

Several years ago I conducted a funeral service for a highly ranked police Officer. It was a large gathering with a police member Guard of Honour etc. The NSW police chief attended and prior to me commencing the service he handed me an item to include in the service - it was the "Police Prayer." I did so in the appropriate place. In my dealings with the funeral industry such an appropriate inclusion has never been mentioned so I forward it to you for if warranted to be passed on to our fellow celebrants.



The Police Prayer

By Author unknown

God, we know it is from you that we have learned what goodness and justice are.

You have given members of the New South Wales Police Service the task of maintaining law and order in the community.

We seek the strength to meet the many challenges encountered in this endeavour.

Give us the courage and the resolution to do our duty at all times, and such a respect and love for justice, that neither promise nor threat, will ever make us depart from it.

Enable us, by your presence, to be protector of the endangered, friend to all, and role model to the children and youth of the community, when called upon to be adviser, may we be inspired with your wisdom and truth.

Grant us the skill and wisdom we need to triumph over wrong, in our role of protecting the community.

Guide us when to enforce, and when to relax the letter of the law.

Help us to be perfect examples of the honesty, the goodness, and the justice which is our duty to maintain,

and grant that our actions will inspire in our community, confidence in its police officers.

We make our prayer through you,
the one true life affirming God.

Amen

NSW Gvt Business Assistance



Set yourself up for success this new year. The NSW Government has multiple programs designed to help you expand and grow your business in 2025, including:

Fee-free short courses in digital or construction.

Free local, independent advisory sessions, events and resources on business planning, marketing and cash flow.

Get in touch with the **Service NSW Business Bureau** to take advantage of these and many other valuable government programs.

Financial incentives to electrify your fleet

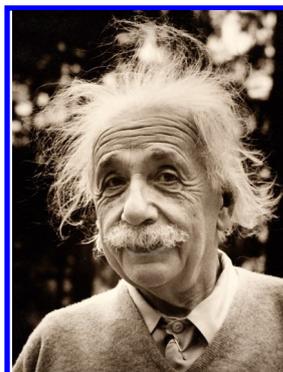
It costs **70% less to run** an electric vehicle (EV) and **40% less to maintain**. Now the **NSW Government** is helping you reduce the upfront costs too.

If your business has a fleet of at least 3 vehicles, you may be eligible to claim **\$5,000** to put towards the purchase of an EV passenger vehicle, and up to **\$20,000** per EV truck.

You can also claim **\$4,000 to \$8,000** for the **supply and installation of smart chargers at your premises**

Contact the **Service NSW Business Bureau** to get support

Call [13 77 88](tel:137788) Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.



Quoted in Peter Michelmore's Einstein (p. 20)

"Einstein wore sweatshirts that grew rattier over the years because wool sweaters made him itch.

When his wife, Elsa,

"urged him repeatedly to dress up for important company," wrote one historian, "Einstein quipped that if the important visitors were coming to see him, they'd see him as he was; but if they were coming to see his clothes, Elsa would show them to his wardrobe."

Nobody talks of his dress sense but his contribution to humanity"



Phil Timbrell, Review

The Grief Journey. by Karon Coombs

The Grief Journey is a book with a unique approach to creating a reference for people suffering grief, counselling people suffering grief or just for people wanting to simply know more about what grief is.

The unique approach to this book is that unlike others that adopt a theoretical approach to understanding grief, which may be very general in nature and may be somewhat subjective, Karon has interviewed nine individuals, some being high profile people, who have been prepared to describe their own grief experience and journey to recovery. By employing this approach we are hearing real life experiences. Karon’s interviewing style is a very open one, allowing the subjects to simply express themselves in their own way without crowding them or trying to force their experiences into a prefabricated theoretical model.

Her interviewing style is to simply probe in a non-judgemental manner and then to let the conversation run its own course. Each chapter ends with a summary of key concepts and the things that helped that particular interviewee.

This book is highly recommended for funeral celebrants as a reference, or for them to leave a copy with some grieving families.

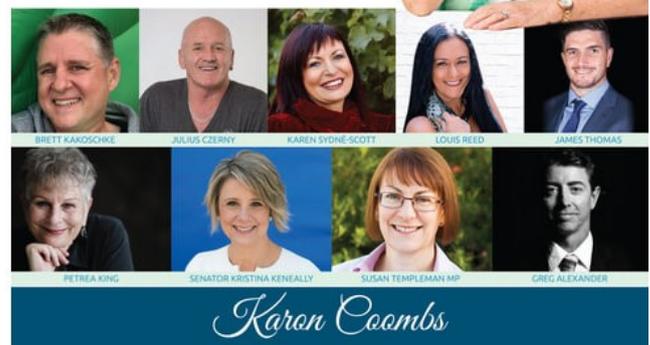
Those interviewed by the author include:

- ♦ **Petrea King:** founder and CEO of Quest for Life Foundation
- ♦ **James Thomas:** Co-founder Feel the Magic
- ♦ **Louis Reed:** Founder of Integrative Medicine Institute
- ♦ **Kristina Keneally:** former premier of NSW – when she was a senator
- ♦ **Susan Templeman MP:** Federal Member for Macquarie
- ♦ **Gregory Alexander:** former Australian Rugby League player

This excellent book, distributed by Global Publishing Group on 22 February 2021, it can be purchased direct from the author for \$45 including postage and packing, by contacting Karon Coombs on 0438593136

The Grief Journey

Inspirational Stories & Strategies to Move & Motivate You To Successful Healing



Life's never just about happiness, it's about meaning... We all suffer from loss and grief at some stage in our life, whether that's from losing a job or business, or health, mobility, fertility, to losing family, pets, your home or even one's sense of self and dignity. All losses lead to grief in varying degrees for the person experiencing it.

International author and bereavement nurse educator, Karon Coombs has sensitively interviewed these well-known people about their personal experiences around loss. These inspiring stories will give you courage and help you work out ways to manage your grief journey. This book is full of easy and practical advice that will guarantee your road to successful recovery.

You'll learn:

- Essential strategies to help rebuild your life after loss
- Tips and secrets from well-known people that will help you on your journey
- How to break through the emotions of anger, sadness, fear and guilt to find forgiveness
- Five golden rules to create meaning from your loss
- Practical strategies to manage your waves of grief
- About the challenges of intimacy and sex after loss
- Why being of service to others can help heal your soul

Be inspired to find meaning and happiness today!

AFP in Schools



Schools urged to help the AFP prevent forced marriage | Australian Federal Police

The AFP-led Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) has urged school communities to be alert to signs of children being forced to marry, with forced marriages the most reported human trafficking

offence in Australia.

The AFP responded to 91 reports of forced marriages in 2023-24, which represented almost 25 per cent of the 382 reports received that year across all human trafficking offence types.

AFP Human Exploitation Commander Helen Schneider said schools were on the front line of identifying and preventing this, because they are often best-placed to spot signs of forced marriage in school-aged children.

Things like a sudden change in domestic arrangements, heightened anxiety when talking about family matters or holidays, or having very limited independence can be early indicators of forced marriage," Commander Schneider said.

The definition of a forced marriage is when a person enters a marriage without freely and fully consenting, because they have been coerced, threatened, or deceived, or because they are incapable of understanding the nature and effect of a marriage ceremony, for reasons including age or mental capacity.

Commander Schneider said forced marriage was a complex and underreported crime because victims are often young and may be reluctant to come forward to authorities.

The AFP takes a victim-centric approach to forced marriage that puts the safety and wellbeing of the victim first," Commander Schneider said.

The AFP's focus is to prevent this crime – by raising awareness of the laws in Australia, the warning signs of forced marriage and the help that we can provide to victims."

Human Exploitation Community Officers (HECOs) engage at-risk areas of the community including with schools where concerns have been raised about forced marriage. HECO's deliver targeted education and prevention initiatives with a focus on available options to seek assistance."

However, the AFP will prosecute if someone has been forced to marry against their will."

Commander Schneider said anyone could be a victim of forced marriage, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, age or gender.

Reports of forced marriage have been increasing in recent years, but the AFP and ACCCE believes there are many cases that we do not know about.

If you suspect you, or someone you know at school is being forced, threatened, coerced or deceived into

marriage, please do not hesitate to seek help. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to police there are other services and agencies that can provide support."

In July, 2024, a Victorian woman became the first Australian to be convicted of arranging a forced marriage. She was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for making her daughter, then 20, marry a man against her will. Less than six months' later, the woman's daughter was murdered by the man.

Victims of forced marriage are also likely to suffer domestic and sexual abuse and other forms of violence and exploitation*.

Common signs of forced marriage include a person who may:

- Have a family history of elder siblings leaving education early, marrying early or indicating concerns of an early marriage;
- Be highly controlled by family or community members in and outside of the home, including being the target of surveillance; always accompanied; limited or no control of finances; limited or no control over life decisions, education and career choices;
- Have communications monitored or restricted;
- Express concern regarding an upcoming family holiday or overseas travel;
- Demonstrate feelings of conflict or concern for the ramifications if they do not go ahead with an agreed marriage or engagement; and
- Express concern of physical or psychological violence for not fulfilling family or community expectations.

Forced marriage has been illegal in Australia since 2013, with the laws tightened in 2019 to extend protection to children under 16. It can apply to legally recognised marriages, cultural or religious ceremonies, marriages which occur in Australia or where a person is taken overseas to be married, and can include the conduct of those involved in facilitating the forced marriage.

Forced marriages are different to legally arranged marriages which are entered into with the full knowledge and consent of all parties.

If you suspect that you or another person has experienced, or is at risk of, forced marriage or human trafficking, call 131 AFP (237) or use the AFP's [human trafficking online information report](#).

If you have immediate concerns for your safety, the safety of another person, or there is an emergency, dial Triple Zero (000).

[My Blue Sky](#), an initiative of ACCCE partner Anti-Slavery Australia, delivers specialised advice and support to individuals and communities affected by forced marriage.

Life Without Barrier's [Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program](#) (FMSSP), funded by the Federal Government, assists victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices.

[A list of signs to identify potential human trafficking and slavery in Australia is available on the AFP's website.](#)

*Australian Institute of Criminology – [When saying no is not an option: Forced Marriage in Australia and New Zealand](#)

COORDINATOR COMMENTS



In December 2024, I was appointed by the AMC Committee as the Public Officer of AMC, and in keeping with regulations, my home in Manyana is now the registered office of our association.

A Public Officer is both the official point of contact for an incorporated association

and one of the authorised association signatories; and is responsible for:

- notifying Fair Trading of any reportable changes in the association 'and its official address within 28 days though I did that on my first day.
- acting as the official contact for the association, including taking delivery of documents served on the association and bringing them to the attention of the committee as soon as practicable.
- maintaining custody of any documents as required by the Constitution. (auditing those now so that I can hand them to the new committee)
- collecting all association documents from former committee members and delivering those to the new committee members (see above)
- returning all association documents to a committee member within 14 days, upon my vacating office

I did not seek the position but was nominated by the AMC President and the AMC Committee unanimously voted in support.

I am however keen, as part of a team effort, to help our AMC set a new standard and to, if I may more or less quote Star Trek (*yes I am a Trekkie*):

**“to boldly go into the future,
where no AMC has gone before”**

There have been some bold steps in the past but we have a new energy and the work accomplished in the past few months has been simply amazing. You will learn more of what has been accomplished and why, at the AGM, if not before.

I strongly urge each and every one of you who are AMC financial members to consider nominating for the AMC Committee, to be elected at the soon to be announced AGM.

I think it important that the Public Officer be independent of the committee so as to ensure there is an ease of transition from one committee to

another and so as to avoid complications at meetings that might impede bold discourse and decision making. To make a very poor analogy, you would not want the Governor sitting in on Parliament. As I said, it was a poor analogy but I think you get the idea in that the Public Officer is not and should not be involved in day to day decision making but can assist with general compliance and so I will be there to help but not to hinder.

That leaves the question as to who will be on the new committee?

Have a look at the Constitution and you will see the Committee roles. (*See the extract on page 3*).

The Policies and procedures will be published as soon as approved by the committee and coupled with induction & training, will help to ensure the new committee will be able to smoothly step into place and be able to introduce new ideas & make decisions quickly, efficiently, and more easily, taking appropriate and compliant action as needed with due diligence and accountability to members.

I am looking forward to meeting the new committee and hope that you will not only join us at the AGM but that YOU will nominate for the Committee.

You can do this.

Let's all make it happen!

**Let's make 2025 and beyond,
a fantastic success.**



This newsletter is a little later than some as the author has been a little busy. Apart from a wonderful rise in bookings, one of which was the wedding of a former Celebrant who said “*got to be you Lou*”, there has been a lot of the work involved in helping the AMC Committee get on track for 2025 and there have been a few personal demands I hope and trust that you all are getting an abundance of bookings for 2025 which is sure to be the best year yet! Keep on Celebrating.