

AMC South Coast Celebrants Cheering for each other

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

June 2025

Volume 4, Issue 5

An update from your
AMC South Coast
Coordinator,
Lou Szymkow

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



COVER PICTURE: Bob Smith's 90th birthday celebration

Happy 90th, Robert James Smith QFSM, CMC, JP

You might have read about Bob Smith in the historical December 2023 edition of this newsletter in which we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Celebrancy, and in one or two other articles; and you may also recall that in June 2024 in honour of his extraordinary contribution to Celebrancy, Bob was granted an honorary membership of the AMC; however 2025 is an extra special year for Robert James Smith, also known as: *'Bob from the Bush'*.

Family, friends, including a few Celebrants and of course, firemen, gathered at Alexandria on 25th May 2025 to help celebrate Robert Smith's 90th birthday.

It was an incredible celebration. While photos flashed on an overhead screen, there was beautiful food aplenty cooked fresh by the host, Bob's lovely and talented daughter Charmaine. Bob jokes with Charmaine, that he is not old but is

now a dinosaur.

One of the many gifts the dinosaur received was a t-shirt emblazoned with the statement that firefighters don't go to hell because they'll extinguish the fires. Copies of the shirt will be on sale on line soon to raise funds for firefighters. Two firefighters and huge truck were



in attendance with apologies from many other firefighters who had been seconded to northern NSW where there were the devastating, once in 500 years, floods. Bob said of that *"the safety of the community always comes first"*.

Charmaine's home was easy to find because of the huge sign that adorned the front of the

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Renew now



SEEPAGE 5-6
FOR DETAILS

UPCOMING
Sth COAST
MEETINGS

AN ONLINE OPD SESSION
7pm; Monday 19th June 2025
CHECK EMAILS AND AMC EVENTS

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building.

As mentioned, there were a number of Celebrants in attendance but there was even a mini OPD session.

Bob from the Bush will tell you that he comes from humble beginnings, having left school at 13 to support the family. He refers to his parents with great affection and admiration, adding that they invented the word poverty.

He is known to quote from his Dad:

- ◊ *“Wouldn’t know shit from clay after two bites”.*
- ◊ *“You don’t have to call the king your uncle anymore, just take a stand”.*
- ◊ *“If the student hasn’t learnt, the teacher hasn’t taught”.*

As one who has trained many people, the last quote is perhaps his favourite.

Other than his 90th birthday, the year 2025 offers a few other anniversaries.

- ◊ 36 years since his retirement from the Fire service
- ◊ 64 years as a Justice of the Peace
- ◊ 90th birthday in May as mentioned.
- ◊ 68th anniversary of marriage to the wonderful Pamela in June
- ◊ 50 years as a Celebrant: Bob is the longest serving Celebrant in NSW, having been appointed as Celebrant number 772, the 273rd Celebrant, on 27th July 1975. When asked how many ceremonies he has performed, Bob said he stopped counting when he reached 1000, years ago.

It should also be mentioned that Bob and his beloved Pamela were also appointed as



2008 following their attendance at the Kings coronation. More about that later.

Robert has always viewed his work as a Celebrant to be an honour in service to the community, but he has the following history of service to the community:

- * 5 years in the army (he marched very year in the Anzac Day parade until his health slowed him down 2 years ago)
- * 32 years and 2 months in fire brigade
- * 64 years as a JP
- * 37 years of operating a welfare fund for firefighters (still on the board, is a Patron but doesn’t have a voting right, though is an advisor)
- * 50 years as a celebrant
- * 4 years on a pier support group assisting retired firefighters.

That is an accumulation of 192 years of community service.

Recently, he undertook the Justice of the Peace competency assessment, noting in the preamble that to be successful, the candidate must achieve over 85% and so was very pleased when he achieved 96%; however at the bottom of the page, it said that he had failed, as a score of 100% was required for competency. He phoned NSW Justice and when he explained that he had been a Justice for 64 years, he was told that though he would no longer be able to witness documents he would be granted the honorary title of JP for the rest of his life.

Shortly after being appointed as a Celebrant 50 years ago, without training of any kind, Bob decided to go to the NSW BDM office, which was at that time in Macquarie Street, Sydney, to sit in on a wedding to observe and learn. A BDM Celebrant explained that he could only sit in if the couple allowed, and they did. At the first wedding, the couple entered a room, and the Public Servant/Celebrant soon followed, to immediately say:

Continued next page.....

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"Is there any reason by consanguinity that you can't be married?"

The couple, puzzled and unsure of what the public servant meant, hesitantly answered: "No".

To which the response was *"Well then, I pronounce you man and wife"*, and the certificate was then signed with the actual 'ceremony' lasting less than a minute with no vows being exchanged.

Bob admitted that he wasn't familiar with the word *consanguinity* either, but in case the reader is at a loss, there is an article on the subject along with explanatory charts, later in this newsletter.

Bob got to sit in on another two ceremonies at which the exact same wording was used, and so he left, realising he would learn nothing other than that he would have to develop his own ceremonies. Other Celebrants were in the same boat, and so not only did he write his own ceremonies, he soon started teaching celebrancy. Robert joined about 20 celebrants meeting at the Greek Theatre in Darlinghurst in an unregistered group, Civil Marriage Celebrants of NSW & ACT, created by Kath Buttriss. On 2nd December 1993, discontent with the management of the group, Robert Smith and fellow celebrant Tom Nash took decisive action by registering two associations, the *'Association of City of Sydney & Suburbs'* and the *'Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of NSW & ACT Incorporated'*, under registration number Y1861513. It was the very first registered Celebrant's association. John O'Carrigan, and Robert Smith then took office to operate the newly registered associations. Robert held the role of that Association's Education Officer and in 2009, along with John O'Carrigan and Tom Nash was bestowed *'Patron for Life'* honours.

During 1993, according to Robert, it was John Smith from Perth, Ashley Berg from Queensland and himself from New South Wales who founded the National Council of Celebrants Associations which was to become the peak body of Celebrancy Associations conferring with the Attorney General's Department well before the Coalition of Celebrant Associations (CoCA) which did not form until 2008.

In 1996, Robert sat on an advisory panel along with Barbara Bell to assist the NSW BDM to create Lifelink, the online registration system that set a standard for other states to follow.

In February 2000 Robert was elected President of the Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants N.S.W. & ACT Inc. and held that position for

four years until he retired from office. In October 2001, the title of Fellow Member was bestowed upon Robert by Dr. Laura Ethridge who at that time operated a Training College in Melbourne. Bob still keeps in close contact with his "Celebrant Friends".

In July 2022 Robert officiated at his granddaughter's wedding in Sydney. Subsequently, he and 11 others were diagnosed with Covid resulting in his hospitalisation with Covid and shingles, but he obviously and fortunately recovered.

Bob often laughs: *"If you don't have a positive outlook in life, life is terrible but be positive and life is wonderful."* He humbly explains that we are all replaceable and that if you put your hand into a bucket of water, when you take your hand out, you will see the hole you've left behind will already be filled.

He has written his autobiography because *"I'm the only one who can"* and has also planned his own funeral and whilst he is struggling over who he will choose as his Funeral Celebrant, he has chosen the song: *"They're Coming to Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!"* by Jerry Samuels (billed as Napoleon XIV) and expects his coffin will be carried on a fire truck.

Along the way Bob has trained and mentored a countless number of people and was always very active in the community, which lead to his being a part of an historic coronation of the King of Tonga in 2008 when the Tongan Minister for Tourism invited Bob and his wonderful wife Pamela, to the coronation held Friday 1st August 2008. Over an 11-day period, Bob and Pam said they had met and dined not just with Queens, Princess, Counts & Countesses, Nobles and Ambassadors but also with as many ordinary people such as themselves.



During the adventure, they enjoyed a Chinese meal with the Tongan ministers of the Crown, rode in the Prime Ministers limousine, shared in a traditional "kava" celebration, explored the main island, enjoyed a concert that included an opera as well Tongan dancing, watched the International -v- Tongan All Stars Rugby Union match which Tonga won, and walked 3klms to the hotel for dinner with nobles and ambassadors from all over the world.

Following the coronation which was filled with pomp

Continued next page.....

From previous page..... and ceremony, Bob and Pamela attended a Royal Ball and yet another feast at the King’s private residence. The next day, it was up early for the Coronation in a Church Service following which Bob and Pam were bestowed medal and appointed as Ambassadors for the Kingdom of Tonga.

When Robert retired from the Fire & Rescue New South Wales as the Personal Superintendent (now equivalent to the position of Assistant Commissioner), after 32 years of service, on 26th November 1990, he continued his Celebrancy however, prior to retirement, he founded the *Employees of New South Wales Fire Brigades Relief and Welfare Fund* to assist fire fighters and their families in their times of hardship. Robert was the Chairman of the fund for fourteen years and holds the honours of Life Membership and Patron for Life; and in 2021 was a finalist in the Fred Hollows Humanitarian of the Year Awards in 2021 for his work. Bob was awarded a Queens Firefighters Medal.

In June 2024 in honour of his extraordinary contribution to Celebrancy, he was granted an honorary membership of Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc. (AMC).

Some years ago, Bob was also nominated by the superintendent of the fire brigade, the late Ted Weidner, for an Order of Australia Medal, which he would humbly but dearly love to be awarded, as it is clear that he has earned and deserves it.

If you would like to nominate him, go to:

<https://www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards/order-australia/nominate-someone-order-australia>



SOUTH COAST WEDDINGS GOOD FOR MENTAL HEALTH

In an article on mental well-being during wedding preparation and its duration,, a London based organisation, 77 Diamonds, listed these important items which clearly resonates with the NSW South Coast. Just looking at the ocean, walking on a beach, enjoying the scenery, wildlife, fresh air & sunshine, bushwalks, are key elements to boosting mental health and all are right here on the south coast:

- Relax the mind and body
- Boost creativity and problem solving
- Increase activity levels (people often undertake physical activity outside)
- Reduce cortisol (stress hormone) levels
- Reduce muscle tension
- Reduce blood pressure
- Lower heart rate
- Increase Vitamin D levels
- Increase concentration
- Improve sleep

[Mental Well-Being Before & During Your Wedding - 77 Diamonds](#)

FOR EXISTING MEMBERS

Early Bird Renewal Offer

Valid on and before 20th June 2025

LOGIN to claim

New Members Sign Up

* Membership will run to 30 June 2026.



This page tells you how to



Renew now and get a discount!

It's Membership renewal time for AMC!

Your Committee is delivering a great 2025-26 Celebrant Renewal fee of:

\$185 IF PAID BY 20 JUNE 2025

This is the best deal for years, and it includes Celebrant Insurance, Copyright cover and all member benefits!

AMC finances are healthy, and funds invested wisely in term deposits, so that members can be rewarded with this great offer.

Why 20 June?

It helps to finalise insurance and copyright offers. From **21 June**, and so the fee jumps up to **\$210** after that date which is down from previous years.

It's easy to renew?

- 1/ Go to the **AMC website** www.marriagecelebrants.org.au;
- 2/ When the image above shows, click on the **LOGIN TO CLAIM** link and **Login** to the **Member portal**
- 3/ Follow the renewal instructions (or click renew in top left corner)
- 4/ Complete details and read and agree to T&Cs
- 5/ Submit – then the magic happens! And you get a **confirmation online**
- 6/ Sign in again to your **Membership portal** and check your AMC website profile and make any changes.
- 7/ **Download** your **2025-6 AMC Membership Certificate** that includes our new Code of Conduct and AMC Objectives.
- 8/ Your 2025-6 insurance and copyright documents will be emailed to you in July. *(Your current insurance is valid until 30 July 2025).*



Student Members:

The Student fee for 2025-26 is \$70, which is great value. Renew now!

Retiring or not renewing?

If you are retiring or not renewing, we will miss you but please **let us know** so that we will update our lists. Please email to info@marriagecelebrants.org.au



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More information about AMC on the next page

ABOUT AMC



AMC Executives

The Australian Marriage Celebrants (AMC), was incorporated 30 years ago but has undergone significant reform and improvement over the past 8 months. AMC is NOW arguably the best it has ever been! The Constitution, Finances, Education, Insurances, and compliances have all been significantly improved.

AMC now, not only connects couples with registered marriage celebrants across Australia through a comprehensive directory of members, but connects Celebrants to each other, offering valuable resources, education, insurances, and a strong community network to enhance knowledge and professionalism.

Being a member of the Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc (AMC) provides benefits and support for marriage celebrants across Australia.

Being a part of our professional marriage celebrant association provides you with value and networking opportunities. It's a way to enhance your professional development, stay connected with the industry, and access relevant information and guidance for your celebrant work and operating your business.

Our AMC is lead by an elected group of volunteer officials (pictured). Click [AMC Committee](#) to find out more.

Our committee oversees and manage the affairs of the AMC for the benefit of members.

If you need to reach one of our [AMC Committee](#) members, please feel free to use the email



Joy Allen
PRESIDENT

Kamal Al Saliby
VICE PRESIDENT

Carolyn Clarke
SECRETARY

Brian Daniels
TREASURER

AMC General Committee

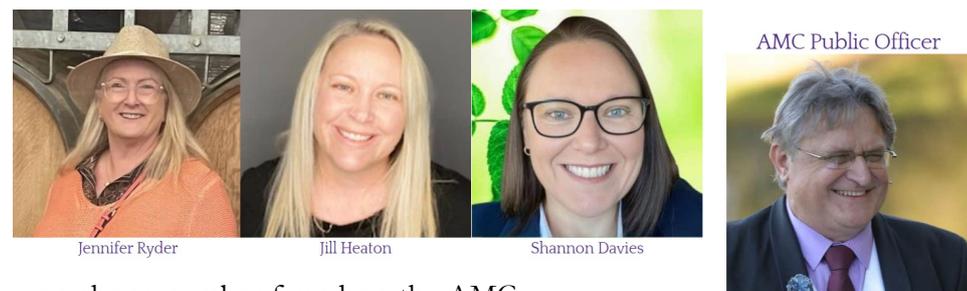


Alexandra Bradley

Ash Reynolds

Heather Taylor

Jennifer Cahill



Jennifer Ryder

Jill Heaton

Shannon Davies

AMC Public Officer

Lou Szymkow

or phone number found on the AMC webpage. All are readily available to assist you, so do not hesitate to get in touch if you require our support or information.

You can find resources, [tips](#), the Constitution, [events](#) and so much more on the new and very much improved webpage. Log in to get a discount on renewal.

You'll even find 'Juno', an AI to help you navigate the webpage.

We have [Regional Coordinators](#) across the nation who also volunteer their time to give you a local contact and local support.

Membership Inclusions:

- 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

Renew Now

See instructions on previous page

- Free monthly online education sessions
- Access to regional coordinators Australia-wide
- Resources, guidelines, templates, and other materials
- Networking and Community
- Advocacy and Representation
- Professional Recognition
- Student Membership option

- [Regional Coordinators](#)
- [AMC Association Membership Member Dashboard](#)
- [AMC Constitution](#)
- [Objects & Code of Conduct](#)
- [AMC Forum Guidelines](#)

You're Not Just An Author, You're A Thought Leader – Let's Show It



This inspiring quote is from Sue Kennedy (pictured) who trades as the Author Academy, an Australian business that coaches authors. You may question what it has to do with Celebrancy, but the obvious explanation is that we are authors, each and every one of us. We may not be writing books, but when we write an original script, a couple's love story, a eulogy, a few words of wisdom here or there in any of our

ceremonies, we are inspiring others, leading others, in thought and direction.

◊ When a couple tells you years after the ceremony that they still read their wedding script on anniversaries, you know that you have strengthened their relationship.

◊ When a family invites you to their home for yet another family funeral and they have the booklets from the past ceremonies, you have performed for that family, you know you have helped that family remember their loved ones and helped them through their grief.

◊ When a couple invites you to their home for the Naming of their first child, you know that you have not only strengthened their relationship but that you are setting a tone for parenting.

There are numerous author academies across the world and a number of them across Australia. They are, of course, geared toward coaching people to write books, and so some of them are operated by publishing houses, while others are established authors or educators. Andrew Griffiths, one trainer, has published a book titled *"Someone Has To Be The Most Expensive, Why Not Make It You"*.



Another sentiment that we, as Celebrants, should consider as business operators.

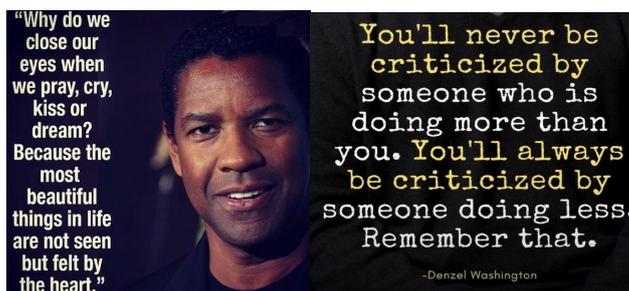
The quote that is this article's title, though, as mentioned earlier, comes from another Author Academy owned and operated by Sue Kennedy, who highlights these points about writing books, though for this article, there is a slight word substitution so that it applies to us Celebrants:

- * **Fun**
Writing a Ceremony (book) should be an enjoyable and exciting journey.
- * **Inspiration**
Your words have the power to inspire and transform lives.
- * **Positivity**
Every story creates a ripple effect—let's make it a positive one.
- * **Believe**
You are good enough. Your voice is powerful. You **can** do this.
- * **Action**
Your Ceremony (book) won't write itself! Taking action leads to incredible opportunities.

Of course you might be considering writing a book but it is nonetheless clear that you're not just an author or just a Celebrant, you're a thought leader and so let's show it in all that we do.

There is another way to hone your skills, to share ideas and to gain motivation & inspiration and that is of course to take part in your AMC Regional meetings, education sessions and networking events.

- <https://www.authoracademy.com.au/about/>
- <https://www.theauthoracademy.com.au/about-ag/>





Attorney General, Hon Michelle Rowland MP

Michelle Anne Rowland is the Attorney-General of Australia in the second Albanese ministry since 13 May 2025. Her principal office is Suite 101C

130 Main Street, Blacktown, NSW, 2148.

In a message posted on LinkedIn, she said she was deeply honoured to be appointed to the position:

- ◇ *“The foremost priority of any government is to keep Australians safe,”*
- ◇ *“At a time when democracy is being challenged, trust in our legal institutions and justice system has never been more important.”*

She was born 16th November 1971 in Blacktown NSW to her Fijian and Australian father. Raised in Seven Hills, she attended Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta, and years later would become a Director of that college.

She worked as a Checkout operator from 1987 to 1995 and then as an Electorate officer from 1995 to 1999.

Attending the University of Sydney, she achieved:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons) - University of Sydney
- Bachelor of Law (LLB) - University of Sydney
- Master of Law (LLM) - University of Sydney.

While at university, she met Michael Chaaya, and they married, currently raising their two daughters, Octavia and Aurelia, in their family home in Glenwood. The family are Catholic Christians.

Michelle has an impressive resume which includes:

- 1999 to 2000 was a regulatory affairs adviser for NRMA Ltd.
- 2000 to 2004 Director of the Western Sydney Area Health Service.
- 2002-2008 local councillor for Ward 2, in Blacktown
- 2007–2008 Deputy Mayor of Blacktown
- 2007 to 2010 Non-Executive Director of the Western Sydney Parklands Trust.
- 2008 to 2010 Director of Our Lady of Mercy, Parramatta (NSW).
- 2009 to 2010 Chair of Screen NSW.
- 2000 to 2010 a senior telecommunications lawyer with law firm Gilbert + Tobin.

As a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) she was elected to the House of Representatives in

2010 for the Division of Greenway and despite opinion polls claiming she would lose Greenway, she was re-elected to the seat at the 2013 federal election with an increased majority, and was subsequently appointed to the Labor opposition's frontbench as Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications as well as Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Along the way, she was a regular visitor to the Blacktown Business Network (BBN).

In October 2015, she was elevated to Shadow Minister for Small Business as well as continuing as Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

She was a member of the shadow ministry from 2013 to 2022, and was elected President of the New South Wales Labor Party in October 2021, a position she retains.

She was the Minister for Communications from 2022 to 2025 in the first Albanese ministry.

Michelle has held the portfolios of Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications (2013–2015), Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism (2013–2016), Shadow Minister for Small Business (2015–2016), and Shadow Minister for Communications (2016–2019). She was elevated to the shadow Cabinet in 2016, and maintained her place following Anthony Albanese's election as party leader in 2019, and was elected President of the Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch) at the NSW State Conference on 9 October 2021.

She has served on the following committees:

- 25/10/2010 to 7/2/2012 House of Representatives Standing: Privileges and Members' Interests
- 25/10/2010 to 7/2/2012 Social Policy and Legal Affairs
- 4/12/2013 to 9/5/2016 Publications
- 4/12/2013 to 13/10/2015 Infrastructure and Communications
- 26/11/2012 to 7/3/2013 Chair of Joint Select committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government served
- 25/10/2010 to 7/2/2012 Joint Standing: Treaties
- 22/3/2011 to 21/11/2011 National Broadband Network
- 14/8/2012 to 5/8/2013 National Broadband Network
- 4/12/2013 to 14/5/2015 Joint Statutory: Human Rights
- 10/10/2016 to 1/7/2019 National Broadband Network

In 2021, Rowland was the most vocal critic inside the Labor caucus of its capital gains tax, negative gearing, and income tax policies, seeing all three dropped.

In 2012, she was one of 98 MPs who voted against a bill for same-sex marriage, but supported its introduction from 2016.

Despite the 2017 Australian Marriage Law postal survey returning a 53.6% no vote for her electorate of Greenway, she voted for the bill that enacted marriage equality in Australia. This was in line with her longstanding position and the national success of the Yes vote, with Michelle declaring:

"Personally, a conversation I had with a mother in Seven Hills provided me with an important perspective. Her son is on active service in the Australian navy and he wants to marry his partner. This man is putting his life on the line in service to Australia. Who am I, and who is any person, to say that this man should not be entitled to marry the person he loves?"

Elected to the House of Representatives for Greenway, New South Wales, 2010 and re-elected

2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022, following the 2025 federal election, she was promoted to succeed Mark Dreyfus as the Attorney-General of Australia on 13 May 2025.

Michelle is the very first woman of Pacific heritage to hold our nation's highest legal post.

Upon her appointment, she said:

"I will build on the work of my esteemed colleague and friend, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, to uphold the rule of law, strengthen integrity, and maintain the public's trust in Australia's legal systems," "It says everything that is great about Australia that a girl from Western Sydney can study hard, work hard, and become the First Law Officer of the land."



- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelle_Rowland
- https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Parliamentarian?MPID=159771
- <https://www.alp.org.au/our-people/our-people/michelle-rowland/>
- <https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland>
- <https://lsj.com.au/articles/michelle-rowland-appointed-new-attorney-general/>





Norse -Viking Weddings

We revisit Viking Wedding because of the June Viking festival in Sussex Inlet. Many couples have developed a love of Nordic traditions which come from Scandinavia including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, or the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland, which are often referred to simply as a "Viking Wedding,".

You will find a more detailed article in an earlier Newsletter but we are revisiting the style because of the relevance to the South Coast with the annual Viking Festival in Sussex Inlet in June each year.

A modern Viking wedding ceremony is all about celebrating love and commitment in a way that's meaningful and unique with a rich and complex wedding culture filled with beautiful, Old-World traditions including poetry and storytelling, an exchange of swords, Handfasting, braided hairstyles, a helmet or two (maybe horned), a fur coat, and shields, before, during or after the ceremony.

Most Norse/Viking weddings occur on a Friday which in honour of the Norse Goddess Freya, the goddess of blessings, love, lust, luck, beauty, fertility, sex, childbirth, war, gold, and *seiðr* (magic for seeing and influencing the future) but occasionally on a Thursday in honour of Thor.

At the marriage of Odin and Frigg, the bride wore a flower crown while her bridesmaids carried her train behind her, and everyone gathered around them as she walked down an aisle formed by guests holding candles in their hands while Odin donned a fur cape draped over his shoulders.

Thor, the Norse God of Thunder and controller of the weather is also represents fertility and so played a large part in the Viking wedding process. A blood sacrifice was to ask Thor for his blessing of the marriage.

The Groom's party carry an ancestral sword to be presented to the bride, with a symbol of **Thor** and a

representation of Thor's hammer, Mjolnir, is often placed in the bride's lap as she asks for Thor's blessing for healthy and strong children.

The day before the ceremony, the couple were separated and the bride would be accompanied by married female friends and family to cleanse herself in a bathhouse where she would be stripped of old clothing and any symbols of her unwed and maidenhood status. She was then bathed in steaming water, followed by freezing water to symbolically wash away her unwed and maidenhood status.

Also on the day before marriage, the Viking groom would also undergo a ceremony to mark his transition from childhood to adulthood before the wedding itself. He would go with the married men of his family to break into a grave to retrieve an ancestral sword or axe. This action was said to make the groom enter into death as a boy and emerge into new life as a man, reborn and filled with marital promises and a family. The sword taken would be given to the bride during the marriage ceremony.

However the weapon retrieved was not necessarily the blade the ancestor was buried with as that blade would have been bent or broken at the ancestor's funeral and the weapon to be used at the wedding, might have been shallowly buried on top or, or close to the grave, specifically for the wedding preparation.

A blood sacrifice, usually a goat or cow, was also a common feature in order to thank the Gods for letting the couple find each other and to ask Thor or Friga, for their blessing of the marriage. The animal's blood would be kept in the temple for use in the ceremony. Like the bride, the groom would be bathed and dressed for the ceremony.

Traditionally, Norse brides wore a long flowing dress made of linen or wool, with ruffles, and maybe a fur trim; and of different vibrant colours that were bright and bold, such as red, blue, yellow, or green, in patterns. Red was prominent because of its association with love, passion, and fertility.

The bride's hair though was more important to the Vikings. Loose, flowing hair with intricate braids symbolised the bride's sexuality.



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Norse –Viking Weddings

In preparation for the wedding, the bride also receives a traditional crown, passed down through her family's generations for each newlywed. Jewellery was important including silver or gold, necklaces, bracelets, thought to be a symbol of wealth and status.

The groom's would wear a tunic and trousers made of wool or linen, leather boots, and a fur cloak but his sword was the most important attire. His hair is worn in a traditional Viking style, often braided (not dreads) and tied back with a leather cord.



Though made popular by operas and movies, historically, Vikings didn't actually wear horned helmets but they do now

symbolise the Viking culture.

Overall, the Valknut is a powerful symbol that represents the strength and unity of a couple's love and commitment. It consists of three interlocked triangles, representing the **past, present, and future**. It may appear on wedding invitations, the wedding cake, venue decoration, and be incorporated into the design on the wedding rings or other jewellery worn by the bride and groom.



Viking weddings were officiated by a Pagan priest or priestess, also known as a Gothi, Godi, or Gyðja responsible for leading the couple through various rituals and ceremonies, invoking the blessings of the gods and goddesses and ensuring that the ceremony was conducted in accordance with the couple's wishes.

The Viking Ceremony begins with the Blot (Blood) ritual. but Mead is now used in the place of blood.

The ring exchange might include both finger rings and arm rings.

The men carry the sword along with a symbol of Thor.

The bride would also gift the groom with an ancestral sword from her living family, representing the interlocking of living and deceased families, and to symbolise the transfer of her father's protection of the bride, to the husband.

The wedding rings, often adorned with intricate designs and symbols, might be exchanged alongside the swords or be placed on the blade or hilt of the sword, adding further meaning to the exchange or given separately and held by the two individually.

The rings being attached to the sword may create an

heirloom piece to be handed down from generation to generation.

In a handfasting ritual, the couple's hands are bound together with a ribbon or cord to symbolize their union. More about handfasting at this link [Tie the knot – Handfasting.](#)

Vows may be said during the handfasting which is a commitment to love and honour each other for life, or during the ring exchange, or separately, but in Viking traditions, Vows were simple, rather than on flowery or grand, focusing on sincerity, and so are very similar to traditional western vows:

- "I, [name], take you, [name], to be my lawfully wedded spouse, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."
- "With this ring, I thee wed. I give you my heart and soul, and promise to love and cherish you always."

"I promise to be your faithful partner, to stand by your side through thick and thin, and to love and support you for all eternity."



Once the ceremony has ended, the Celebrant announces that it is time for the *brudhlaup*, (brullaup) or 'Bride Running' whereupon the groom's family race the bride's to the reception hall and the family that loses has to serve drinks to the family who arrived first for the rest of the wedding night.

Before the festivities, the Bride pours a measure of Mead and hands it to the Groom who then and consecrates the drink to Thor and then toasts to Odin. The Groom then hands the cup back to his bride who toasts to Freya.

The Viking wedding was a week-long celebration filled with feasting, music, and dancing with entertainment and unique sporting events. Games were played and there was dancing, mock insults, wrestling, throwing competitions, mock sword play, and archery and maybe an artist to do rune tattoos at the reception and a magnificent feast of food and drinks of every kind was served including fish, roasted meat, roast pig.

- [Viking Weddings: Stories of Tradition and Sacredness \(historydefined.net\)](#)
- [Viking Wedding Traditions \(to Plan a Modern Norse Ceremony\) \(seekscandinavia.com\)](#)
- [wedding customs and traditions by Lauren Whalley](#)
- <https://www.theknot.com/content/norse-wedding-traditions>
- [Handfasting](#)
- [Freya - Norse Goddess of Fertility by Ulf Eisenbart](#)
- https://thewarriorlodge.com/blogs/news/the-traditional-viking-wedding?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIh7bHs9_ThgMVNSaDax29myXEAAAYASAAEgIU1vD_BwE



Who can claim home office expenses?



Alternatively, the ATO allows a (revised) [fixed rate method](#) as an option from 1 July 2022. The fixed rate method is a lot simpler and allows

you to claim 67 cents per hour you work from home for included expenses like:

- data and internet
- mobile and home phone usage
- electricity and gas
- computer consumables (e.g. printer ink), and
- stationery.

If you choose to apply the fixed rate method, you can't then claim a separate deduction for any expenses covered by that method (no double-counting!). If you choose this method you can still claim a separate deduction for things described above not covered by those included expenses such as:

- the decline in value of home office equipment,
- repairs and maintenance of that equipment, and
- cleaning costs (in the case of a dedicated home office).

You can visit the [ATO website](#) to learn more about both methods for working from home expenses.

- [Eligibility to claim](#)
- [Additional running expenses](#)
- [Choosing a method to calculate your claim](#)
- [Prior year work from home methods](#)
- [Expenses you can't claim](#)

Keep your receipts for tax time

Keep a record of your expenses, as the ATO may ask you to prove your work-related claims. Receipts are also handy if you're sorting out your Home & Contents Insurance for the first time, as they provide a good estimate of the value you need to cover.

You can store your receipts and records digitally. Consider keeping photos or scans on a cloud-based storage service.

TIP: The ATO's preferred choice of communications now is via "myGov". If the ATO is attempting to contact you, it will likely be in relation to something already sent to your myGov account by the ATO.

Ref:

- [How to Claim a Tax Deduction on Home Office Expenses | GIO](#)
- [Working from home expenses | Australian Taxation Office \(ato.gov.au\)](#)

Your eligibility to claim depends on many variables. Exploring the [Australian Tax Office \(ATO\) Home Office expenses](#) can help you determine what applies to you.

You may be eligible if:

- your primary work function is conducted at home
- you work remotely some of the time, or
- you worked from home for a portion of the tax year.

If you're a business owner, the ATO has different taxation and deduction rules. [Learn more about business insurance and tax deductibility.](#)

To claim working from home expenses, you must:

- be working from home to fulfil your employment duties, not just carrying out minimal tasks, such as occasionally checking emails or taking calls
- incur additional running expenses as a result of working from home
- have records that show you incur these expenses.

To calculate your deduction for working from home expenses, you must use one of the methods set out below.

Where you incur running expenses for both private and work purposes, you need to apportion your deduction. You can only claim the work-related portion as a deduction.

What work from home expenses may be deductible?

If you're working from home, many common operating costs may be tax deductible. These can include:

- electricity expenses associated with working
- phone and internet expenses
- computer and stationery consumables, and
- home office equipment, including computers, printers, office furniture and furnishings.

For home office equipment and furniture, you may be able to claim either:

- the total cost of items up to \$300, or
- the decline in value for items over \$300.

You can only claim the portion of expenses paid that directly relates to earning your income. You'll need to calculate how many hours are spent working relative to the item's cost.

For example, you can divide your electricity bill between household (private) usage and work. The ATO provides formulas to support this. If you're using a tax agent or accountant, they'll be able to help with these calculations so you can claim correctly.



geeks2u

but whilst the software underpinnings of the macOS does give it some barriers against malware, it is because of Apple's smaller overall market share that criminals target Windows more heavily, but not exclusively.

With smartphones and tablet devices it's harder for malware to propagate generally. Malware on Apple mobile has been limited but there have been instances of dodgy apps on the Google Play store over the years. Phone service providers such as Telstra has introduced protection systems as well and when you get a suspicious text, Telstra will often give you the option to report & delete the offending message.

While Apple iOS viruses are rare criminals use "phishing" scams where they send you an SMS or email message that appears to be from a trusted source but is fake.

Nearly all reputable antivirus software companies sell subscriptions with an annual payment and regular updates.

It's worth comparing and checking how much coverage you can get, and on how many devices. If you only have the one PC, there's no point in paying for a package that will cover five. Conversely if you've got a desktop computer, a laptop and multiple devices, a multi-device subscription could be advisable.

Look for packages that offer not just simple antivirus scanning, but also malware and phishing protection in real time. Some packages will also offer a password vault feature, which is super handy to keep, generate and recall passwords for multiple services without falling into the trap of using the same password across multiple services.

It's also worth considering online cloud backup, which is also a common feature in antivirus packages these days, so that if you are subject to a ransomware attack, you can restore your data without having to engage with cybercriminals at all however the backup can prove costly if you have a lot of data, which most of us do.

It is essential that you keep software up-to-date to maximise protection.

You can browse the range of antivirus software from [Officeworks here](#). Or search online for deals; however, as with all online purchases, be careful that you don't hand over any passwords to a third party.

[Antivirus software explained: do you need it? | Geeks2U](#)

In May, it was reported that once again, a cybercriminal had attempted to scam AMC members by sending out an email disguised as being from the AMC President. This seems to happen annually, and an effort is being made to identify the criminals. In a previous event about two years ago, it was found that a member's computer had been infected with a virus after a celebrant's son had used the device to download a computer game that contained the virus and scam emails were then sent from that computer without the user's knowledge.

The following article is based on a Geeks2U article that is referenced linked at the end.

Brothers David and Michael Hancock started Geeks2U in 2005 but it is now a part of the Officeworks group. Computer viruses and malware are a business harvesting data for resale to other criminals and/or ransoming data for criminal gain. The Privacy Act prohibits reputable businesses from accessing unnecessary data, but criminals operate outside the law.

Computer viruses can be spread in computer games, via emails, text messages and from website downloads that are deviously designed to appear legitimate. Email senders are often disguised to appear reputable, and a simple technique is to hover your mouse over a sender's name to see the real email address that sent it.

Some viruses and malware remain on systems to be stealthily spread to other computers and systems without being detected or eradicated, to be triggered maliciously at a later date or event.

Antivirus software has to offer a suite of features to keep your PC or Mac safer online.

Whereas twenty or so years ago, antivirus makers released monthly software updates, but now there's more of a focus on tracking and detecting everything going on in your PC to ward off the possible bad effects of an inadvertent malware installation.

Microsoft has its [Windows Security Center](#), which includes software to scan for malware, some phishing attempts and firewalls to protect users at a basic level however it's very much built around Microsoft's own Edge browser for maximum protection, which means you're far less covered if you're using others browsers such as Google's Chrome or Mozilla's Firefox, so whilst it is better than nothing it doesn't offer a high level of security.

Apple used to advertise that viruses were a PC problem,



UNFAIR CONTRACT

Unfair contract terms in consumer and small business contracts - renewed as a 2025-26 ACCC Compliance and Enforcement priority

The ACCC's [2025-26 compliance and enforcement priorities](#) were recently released.

The Small Business team at the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has reported that unfair contract terms in consumer and small business contracts will continue to be a priority for 2025-26. In the financial year ahead, this priority will include a specific focus on harmful cancellation terms, including those associated with automatic renewals, early termination fee clauses and non-cancellation clauses.

This may be of relevance to Celebrants dealing with directories, other suppliers or vendors, and subscriptions.

In setting this priority, the ACCC continues to recognise that unfair contract terms can result in substantial consumer or small business detriment.

[Read our media release to find out more.](#)

Unfair contract terms law

From 9 November 2023, changes to the Australian Consumer Law prohibited businesses from proposing, using, or relying on unfair contract terms in standard form contracts with consumers and small businesses.

The ACCC will continue to use a range of tools to encourage compliance and prevent breaches of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* in relation to unfair contract terms.

Courts can impose substantial penalties on businesses and individuals who include unfair contract terms in their standard form contracts.

Small business remains an enduring priority

There are some forms of conduct so detrimental to consumer welfare and the competitive process that the ACCC regards them



as ongoing priorities. Since 2024, ensuring that the protections of competition and consumer laws and small business industry codes of conduct apply to small businesses and the agriculture sector has been listed as an enduring priority.

Visit the [ACCC small business web page](#) to access topics and education resources relevant to small business, all in one spot.

ACCC small business education module

Test your knowledge! Complete the ACCC's [Small business education program](#) and the [module on unfair contract terms](#).

Help and information

Find [more information about unfair contract terms and standard form contracts](#) on our website.

If your business has a problem with an unfair contract term, you should first try contacting the other business or individual. You can ask them to remove or change a term you think may be unfair.

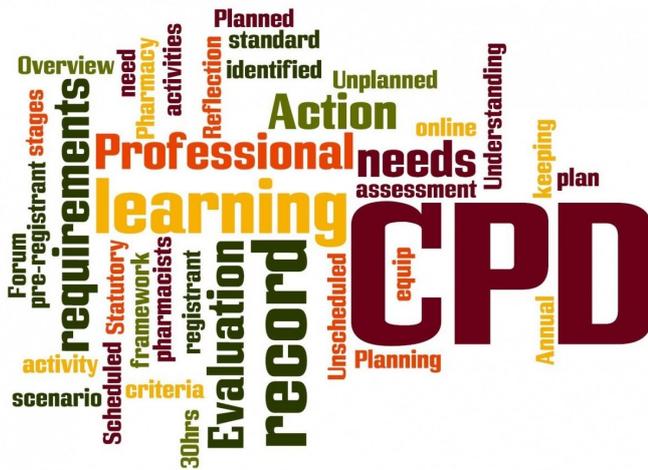
You can [make a report to the ACCC](#) if you think a term is unfair. Data from reports informs what we investigate and what enforcement action we may take, and our compliance and education activities.





Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Marriage Celebrants Portal



The 2025 Compulsory (Obligatory) Professional Development activities have been released for completion by 11:59pm 31 December 2025.

Professional development

All Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants must complete professional development activities each calendar year.

- Complete these activities in the [online self-service portal](#). If you cannot access the portal, MLCS can send them to you by email or hard copy.

Your responsibilities for professional development

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 may be imposed, 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.



AMC offers monthly education sessions.

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.



EXEMPTION

Exemptions from compulsory professional development activities

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.

MLCS may also exempt you from completing the professional development activities if you are registered towards the end of a calendar year. You don't have to apply for these exemptions as MLCS will tell you in your registration email if you are exempt for these reasons.

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



To complete your OPD/CPD you will need to log into the Marriage Celebrants' (MarCel) Portal on the AG website.

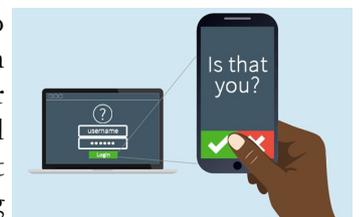
<https://marriage.ag.gov.au/mcportal#timedOut>

Just follow the links on the page but if your password is over 12 months old, you will need to reset it before signing in. Please wait 15 minutes after a successful password reset before signing in.

Log in to your account

- **Keeping your information secure**

Celebrants accessing the portal for the first time since 30/06/2023 will need to set up two factor authentication (2FA) using their registered email address. Note that MLCS is now referring to 2FA as multifactor authentication



- If you have already set up multifactor authentication, simply click the 'Sign in' button.
- If you have set up multifactor authentication but forgotten your password, click the 'Forgot password' button. **Note:** you will need access to your mobile phone or email address.

Continued from previous page



Marriage Celebrants Portal

Useful resources

The following user guides show you how to:

[Sign in to the portal](#)

[Temporarily change how you receive sign in codes](#)

[Permanently change how you receive sign in codes](#)

[Change your email address or phone number](#)

[Set up multifactor authentication](#)

After you have logged in, choose OPD and you will see this screen giving you two options. Select the OPD you wish to undertake.

The next screen, if you choose Consent, this will show:

◇ **Real Consent (2025 refresher) - Compulsory - 25AGD001**

Home / OPD - Current Year

Professional Development - 2025

Information about professional development obligations can be found on our [website](#).

The Marriage Act 1961 (paragraph 39G(1)(b)), Marriage Regulations 2017 (section 53) and the Marriage (Celebrant Professional Development) Statement 2025 set out the professional development requirements for authorised marriage celebrants.

Compulsory professional development activities must be completed by 31 December each calendar year. Failure to complete professional development requirements by 31 December may result in a disciplinary measure, which can include a caution, additional professional development, suspension or deregistration.

Professional development activities assist Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants to deliver professional, knowledgeable and legally correct services to marrying couples.

Thank you for your commitment to meeting your professional development obligations.

Note: Once you have completed an activity or have been granted an exemption, you will no longer be able to view the activity/activities.

Compulsory Professional Development Activities

To meet your obligations, you must complete all of the activities listed below.

Year	Activity Type	Activity Status	Exemption granted	Obligations Met: No
2025	Real Consent (2025 refresher) - Compulsory - 25AGD001	Not Started	No	Action
2025	Knowledge of the Law (No 1) - Compulsory - 25AGD002	Not Started	No	Action

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Information about professional development obligations can be found on our [website](#).

What is the activity about?

This activity discusses key aspects of real and voluntary consent given by parties intending to marry in Australia.

What do you need to do?

Step 1: Read the booklet that can be downloaded from the following link: <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/2025-compulsory-professional-development>.

Step 2: Answer the questions below. You will have 4 attempts to answer each question correctly

Step 3: After answering all the questions in the celebrant portal, click **Submit**. If you have started but wish to complete the activity at a later time, you may click **Save**. Please remember to click **Submit** to complete the activity.

Please note:

- * You will not be able to click the submit button unless all questions have an answer selected.
- * The activity will be submitted automatically only if you have answered all questions correctly, or you have exhausted all 4 attempts to answer each question correctly. Once submitted, you can no longer access the activity.
- * When you have completed the activity, you will see a confirmation message on your screen. This is your opportunity to **Print** or **Download** the activity for your records (the Print and Download buttons are available at the bottom of the screen). Once this screen is closed, you will no longer be able to access this page, or to print or download your results.
- You will be able to see the status on the 'Current Year' page confirming you have 'completed' the activity. Please check the

status to confirm the activity was successfully completed.

- When the activity is submitted and you see a confirmation message, the department will be notified that you have completed this activity.

There is no pass or fail mark.

Download and read <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/2025-compulsory-professional-development>.

If you press Ctrl + A, you will select all and can then copy and paste to a blank page on your computer. This will give you the entire test which you can study offline.

Questions are all multiple choice with four options and you have four attempts.

Once you have completed the section and submitted, you will receive an immediate response advising which questions have been answered correctly or incorrectly, and you have the opportunity of your next attempt.

When all are correct, you will receive an email confirming completion and you repeat the process for the next section on Knowledge and Law.

Unlike the first section, you do not receive a booklet but instead you are directed to the Act, Guidelines, Regulations and other relevant laws.



You will not find the answer's all in one resource.

YOU GOT THIS!



- [Notice of Intended Marriage](#) Marrying couples and approved marriage celebrants
- [Document outlining the obligations and consequences of marriage and stating the availability of marriage education and counselling](#) To be given to couples who have lodged a notice of intended marriage form with an approved marriage celebrant. *Translated versions of this document are available.*
- [Declaration of no legal impediment to marriage](#) Marrying couples and approved marriage celebrants
Under section 50(3) of the Marriage Act 1961, this form shall be printed on the reverse of 1 of the official certificates of marriage.
- [Official certificate of marriage](#) Approved marriage celebrants
Under section 50(3) of the Marriage Act 1961, 1 of the official certificates of marriage shall be on the reverse side of the paper with the declaration of no legal impediment to marriage.
- [Record of use of Form 15 Marriage Certificates](#) Approved marriage celebrants
Under Paragraph 73(5) of the Marriage Regulations 2017, an authorised marriage celebrant must keep a record for each Form 15 marriage certificate they use.
- [Marriage Act 1961](#)
- [Marriage Regulations 2017](#) [Federal Register of Legislation - Marriage Act 1961](#)
- [Certificate of faithful performance by interpreter](#) Interpreter for a marriage ceremony
- [Guidelines for marriage celebrants.](#) These guidelines may help you understand your responsibilities.
- [Your responsibilities as a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant](#) Understand your responsibilities as a Commonwealth registered marriage celebrant.

- [Marriage forms](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Template for Certificate of Marriage for Civil Ceremonies](#)
- [Template for Certificate of Marriage for Religious Ceremonies](#)
- [Sample Certificate of Marriage for Civil Ceremonies](#)
- [Sample Certificate of Marriage for Religious Ceremonies](#)
- [Template for Certificate of Marriage for Civil Ceremonies](#)
- [Template for Certificate of Marriage for Religious Ceremonies](#)
- [Commonwealth Statutory declarations](#)
- [Marriage Celebrants Self Service Portal](#)

- [About statutory declarations](#)
- [Ways to make a Commonwealth statutory declaration](#)
- [Download a Commonwealth statutory declaration to be observed by an approved witness](#)
- [Create a digital Commonwealth statutory declaration using myGov](#)
- [Rules to get married in Australia](#)
- [Before you get married](#)
- [After you get married](#)
- [Get married overseas](#)
- [Combined Declaration of no legal impediment to marriage and Official certificate of marriage](#)

10 Tips for good people

1. Always offer a handshake or a greeting when meeting someone.
2. Listen more than you speak.
3. Put down your phone, out of sight, for meetings and meals.
4. Excuse yourself when interrupting another's focus.
5. Do not interrupt others when they are speaking, even if you have a great point.
6. Do not ask for a favour unless you are willing, able, and intend to reciprocate.
7. Compliment someone for their ideas, work, and intelligence, not just for their appearance.
8. If you do not have something nice and of value to say, stay silent.
9. When receiving or passing on information, consider is it truthful and helpful, or harmful.
10. Be kind without exception of with expectation of reward.

OPD-EDUCATION

GUARDIANSHIP AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY



Sometimes people with impaired or limited decision-making capacity have a guardian appointed.

There is no national uniform guardianship and administration legislation, as the formal appointment of guardians in Australia is governed by State and Territory laws. While arrangements between the States and Territories vary, the main principles are the same.



Generally, guardians are appointed through the orders of tribunals or courts appointing a guardian or person to manage personal matters or the financial affairs of a person. Guardianship and administration orders are the formal orders authorising a person or organisation to make decisions for a person, or act for and sometimes give consent (on specified matters only) on another person's behalf. The guardian helps to protect the rights and interests of the person, usually known as the protected person.

There is always a presumption that people have the capacity to make their own decisions.

If someone has a guardian, the guardian's decision-making will be contained (or limited) to what is in the guardianship order.

Often guardians can decide on the protected person's living arrangements, education and work arrangements, consent to medical or other treatments, take legal action and make various health and welfare related decisions.

Guardians are not permitted to vote in an election, make a will, adopt a child or give consent to a marriage on behalf of the protected person.

Individuals may be appointed as guardians by the relevant court or tribunal in their location. Often that person is a family member, friend or unpaid carer, and will need to be of at least 18 years of age. Where such an individual is not available, an independent statutory office-holder is likely to be appointed. For example, in the Australian Capital Territory this function is undertaken by the Public Trustee and Guardian.

VOID A marriage is void if the consent of either of the parties is not real consent because:

- it was obtained by duress or fraud, or
- the party is mistaken as to the identity of the other party or as to the nature of the ceremony performed, or
- the party did not understand the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony.

KEY MESSAGES

- ◇ The parties must consent at the time of the marriage. Prior consent is not a substitute for real consent at the time of the marriage.
- ◇ A third party cannot provide real consent on behalf of a party to the marriage, even if that third party has power of attorney or is a guardian to the relevant party to the marriage.
- ◇ If you are concerned about whether a person's consent is real consent, you should speak to the person in the absence of any other party. You may also speak to third parties but should first seek permission from the person involved.
- ◇ **'Real consent' cannot be given by a third party**
- ◇ An authorised celebrant must not rely on a power of attorney or the consent of a party's guardian as substitute for the real consent of a party to a marriage. That is, real consent is not something that can be given by a third party on behalf of the party to the marriage
- ◇ Note that while a third party such as a guardian cannot consent to marry on someone's behalf, they may raise issues of capacity in relation to that person
- ◇ Authorised celebrants should consider whether there is any sign that a party cannot manage their own affairs, for example, being subject to a guardianship order
- ◇ **A party to an intended marriage should be advised to seek independent legal advice if they have questions about the operation of guardianship orders or powers of attorney, having regard to their particular circumstances.**
- ◇ Authorised celebrants must ensure that **both parties freely and genuinely consent to the marriage at all times during the ceremony.**
- ◇ **An authorised celebrant who believes the consent of one or both parties is not real consent should refuse to solemnise the marriage, even if the marriage ceremony has commenced.**
- ◇ You should thoroughly document any conversations you have about consent. This will provide a record of your decision-making process, should you be called upon to give evidence in court as to the consent of the parties.

KNOWLEDGE –OPD



A person must provide real consent at the time of the marriage

It is important to remember that a person must consent at the time the marriage is solemnised. An authorised celebrant might have been satisfied that a party was capable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony before the ceremony was due to be solemnised, but might form a different view as a result of the party's conduct during the marriage ceremony itself. In such a case the authorised celebrant should not proceed to solemnise the marriage until satisfied that the party is capable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony. In other words, prior consent is not a substitute for real consent at the time of the marriage.



If at any point an authorised celebrant is unsure of the genuine consent of either party, they should not proceed with solemnising the marriage.

Consent issues that arise on the day of the marriage ceremony can include duress or a party to the marriage being intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, experiencing mental health issues or otherwise appearing to be in an altered mental state to an extent that this could impair their ability to consent to the marriage.

If alcohol or drugs are involved, the party should be displaying a reasonable level of comprehension or understanding of the nature and effect of marriage. A person who has had an alcoholic drink prior to the ceremony but is not inebriated is most likely to be able to be in a position to consent to the marriage. However, a person who is intoxicated is unlikely to be in a position to form the necessary understanding of the nature and effect of marriage.



It is an authorised celebrant's responsibility to refuse to proceed with the solemnisation of the marriage if the parties are so affected by drugs or alcohol that the marriage would be void due to a lack of consent. Ultimately, this is something that can only be determined on the day and requires the individual judgement of the celebrant. The authorised celebrant may wish to offer to conduct a commitment ceremony, with the legal marriage being performed at a later date. The celebrant should take the best efforts to extract themselves from the situation as safely as possible. It may be a good idea to explain issues of consent, and your responsibilities, with the couple prior to the day of the ceremony, especially if you think it might become an issue.



MENTAL CAPACITY

The Commonwealth *Marriage Act 1961* includes provisions whereby a marriage may be void if the consent of a party was not real, if a party was not of marriageable age or if a party lacks the cognitive/mental ability to understand the ceremony/marriage. If a Celebrant conducts a marriage where there was not real consent, the penalty for the Celebrant can be up to 6 months imprisonment.

As Celebrants, we are not experts in mental capacity and we start from the acceptance of capacity, that is, we never presume incapacity, however we must look for warning signs and triggers. Unless there is a valid trigger to justify a further assessment of a person's capacity, authorised marriage celebrants should generally treat everyone as if they are capable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony and so every adult is presumed to have capacity to make decisions.

Marriage of course, changes a person's legal status making the parties to marriage next of kin to each other and as such, it negates previous Wills. As such, it is, apart from one of love & romance that we hope exists, is a financial decision altering the financial status of both parties to the marriage. We know that 'consent' is not simply capitulation but rather is an active intent and that persons entering into marriage must have the mental capacity to make the decision to marry. Further, that consent to marry can be revoked at any time prior to the exchanger of vows.

The Law Council of Australia has published a response to Elder Abuse, titled *Assessing Mental Capacity A Guide* The Law Council Of Australia which includes commentary on the impact of marriage, divorce and death on wills and estate, the NSW Law Society tells us in its publication "A Practical Guide For Solicitors" that:

"There is no single legal definition of mental capacity in New South Wales.

The NSW Law Society says that the legal definition of mental capacity depends in each case on the type of decision which is being made or the type of transaction involved. This means there are a variety of legal tests of mental capacity. Some are contained in legislation such as the Guardianship Act 1987 (NSW) and others have been developed in common law, such as the test for testamentary capacity.

"A Practical Guide For Solicitors" adds :

The different legal tests for mental capacity mean that a client may have the mental capacity to make some decisions, such as deciding whether to make small purchases like groceries, but

Continued next page.....

KNOWLEDGE –continued

Continued from previous page.....

may lack the mental capacity to make other decisions such as deciding whether to enter into more complicated financial arrangements”, and of course we can include marriage to that.

A finding of incapacity in one area does not automatically mean that mental capacity is lacking in another area; for example, the Supreme Court of NSW has found that a person who is incapable of managing their financial affairs may still be mentally capable of making a will.

A person may not be capable on managing their affairs but have the mental capacity to make an enduring power of attorney.

A person may not have the mental capacity to make a contract but have capacity to make a will.

Similar, if not greater, mental capacity is needed to make a power of attorney compared to that required for a will.

The fundamental issue is whether the client is able to understand the general nature of what they are doing. If a client has ongoing difficulty in demonstrating this level of understanding then this may indicate a lack of mental capacity which warrants further exploration.

That further exploration may be by the Celebrant, the client’s solicitors perhaps even by the client’s solicitor but even then it is the Celebrant who must make the final decision based on the best information that can be procured.

One Celebrant reported an instance of when she attended the interview of a couple at an Aged Care facility and found:

- Party A did all the talking
- Party B, who was of advanced years, had been diagnosed with dementia and life expectancy was short
- Party B, did not seem completely lucid or have a full understanding of what was taking place
- Party B was wealthy while Party A was a temporary carer who had not known Part B until recently hired
- Party A said that no relatives would be attending the ceremony and that the witnesses would be two staff members know to Party A.
- The nurses on the premises expressed their concerns that whilst Party B could decide between two choices on the food menu, Party B struggled with more complex decisions such as clothing choices.

Party A provided a document from the resident doctor stating that Party B had been assessed as capable of making decisions

Concluding that further exploration of capacity was warranted, the Celebrant expressed doubts to the doctor about Party B’s capacity, and the doctor said that when Party A asked for the assessment, it was not revealed that Party A was to be a party to the marriage. The doctor immediately reviewed the assessment to conclude that Party B, was not capable and so the wedding was cancelled though a commitment ceremony might have been offered in its place, however the matter was referred to Federal Police.

The UK (National Society of Medicine), recommends to its Medical Practitioner members that before they write a

report as to capacity, that they follow these steps:

- 1) Get a letter from the solicitor detailing legal tests
- 2) Set aside enough time
- 3) Assess (in the standard way) whether the patient has dementia
- 4) Check that the patient understands each of the Banks v Goodfellow points (box 1)
- 5) Record the patient's answers verbatim
- 6) Check facts, such as the extent of the estate, with the solicitor
- 7) Ask about and review previous wills
- 8) Ask why potential beneficiaries are included or excluded
- 9) If in doubt about capacity, seek second opinion from an old age psychiatrist or other experienced professional

What that checklist tells us is that assessment of capacity or incapacity, even by medical practitioners, is not necessarily a simple process and of course, it should not be.

The MLCS, offers this guide to Assessing whether a person’s consent is real consent

1. Speak to the party in the absence of any other party

If an authorised celebrant forms a view that a person’s consent may not be real consent, they should discuss the matter with the party

concerned **in the absence of the other party** to ensure that the consent is real consent. This is particularly important if the celebrant is concerned that a party may be experiencing duress or is mentally incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony.

Meeting with the party separately does not mean you need to meet with them alone. Such meetings should always be conducted in a culturally appropriate way, with regard to the safety of the party and their wishes (including with regard to an appropriate support person).

The discussion with the party should, however, occur in the absence of (involved) third parties such as parents.

A mistake as to the nature of the ceremony performed may arise, for example, where a person thought the ceremony was a betrothal ceremony and not a marriage ceremony.

In cases where there is doubt about whether a party is capable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony, a general understanding will be sufficient. A high level of understanding is not required. The authorised celebrant should ask questions of the person about whom they have concerns in order to gauge the level of their understanding of the marriage ceremony and what it involves. For example, why they want to marry the other person, what marriage is or where they will be living after the marriage.



Continued next page.....

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KNOWLEDGE –continued

2. Speak to third parties

In addition to speaking to the party concerned, an authorised celebrant can speak to third parties to assess if consent is real. For example, in cases of incapacity, an authorised celebrant might be assisted by speaking with family members, medical experts who know the party, guardians if relevant, or carers or staff at the nursing home where a person is living if they are elderly or have a disability. When speaking to third parties, it is important to respect the privacy of the person involved. You should seek permission from the person to approach certain people, tell them who you would like to speak to and why, and let them know what you are going to say.

3. Keep detailed records

An authorised celebrant should thoroughly document any conversations they have to assess a person's consent to marry. This means if any questions arise at a later date the celebrant has a record of their decision-making process. This is important because celebrants may be called upon to give evidence in court as to the consent of the parties.



4. Ask yourself the following questions

The following questions, while not definitive, may assist an authorised celebrant to identify situations where consent issues may arise:



- ◇ Is one party silent or otherwise not communicating?
- ◇ Is one party speaking nonsensically or constantly interrupting?
- ◇ Has the couple been accompanied by extended family or friends who do some or much of the talking in response to the celebrant's questions?
- ◇ Is one party displaying emotions that are excessive or inappropriate in the circumstances?
- ◇ Has one party expressed feelings of shame or dishonour on the family if expectations are not met?
- ◇ Does one party answer all of the questions for the other party as well as for themselves?
- ◇ Does one party have noticeable problems with memory?
- ◇ Is there any sign that a party cannot manage their own affairs, for example, **being in full care in a nursing home or being subject to a guardianship order?**
- ◇ Does one of the parties seem vague or unclear about the purpose of the meeting with the celebrant, or are they unable to give any information about themselves and why they want to be married?
- ◇ Does the party understand English? If not, the celebrant should insist that an interpreter is used or, if an interpreter is not available, pass the function of performing the marriage on to a celebrant who speaks that language.

To assist you further in understanding cognitive ability, a training program is available at :

- <https://www.decisionmakingcapacity.dcj.nsw.gov.au/elearning/pa-ge357945.aspx>

There you will find the reminder that making decisions is empowering and shapes who we are. We all have differing skill in making decisions and have learned how to make decisions over time and by experience. Sometimes we make decisions on our own and at other times we involve others for advice or support. But, not everyone gets the chance to make their own decisions, particularly people with a disability, who are sometimes presumed not to be capable of making their own decisions. Such assumptions are a breach of their human rights.

Under NSW law, every adult has the ability to make their own decisions. We can't assume that a person lacks decision-making ability based on appearance, age, disability, behaviour, language skills or any other condition or characteristic.

Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)* put a spotlight on the human right of persons with disabilities to make their own decisions.

In that training, we also learn that 'Mental capacity' refers to the decision-making ability of a person but differs to 'legal capacity'. A person's legal capacity is the key to being able to participate fully in society and exercise civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It gives a person legal protection of their rights and recognises them as having the power to engage in transactions and create, modify or end legal transactions.



There are a number of excellent resources available to assist a celebrant to assess whether a person is able to understand the nature and effect of the marriage, such as:

- The Law Society of New South Wales' 'When a client's mental capacity is in doubt: A practical guide for solicitor'
 - <https://www.lawsociety.com.au/sites/default/files/2018-03/Clients%20mental%20capacity.pdf>
- The New South Wales Department of Justice <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/resources/capacity-toolkit.html>
- [Home \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://www.nsw.gov.au)
- https://www.alrc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/elder_abuse_131_final_report_31_may_2017.pdf
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1925203/>
- https://www.decisionmakingcapacity.dcj.nsw.gov.au/elearning/in-dex.aspx?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR11tOLqOQjOm_Wb6mdES3e0gn8Wjb4WQmEuFFms4e3TNLL2pAitblQgFwY_a_e_m_A_f_6_q_c_c_-Zk1BZbaY_cVMWVrVlgYTqt4R_njrUZhpflapNhhikEuu48WW34alXDs7cdhg2ZRdWexxHuMz3lEwNOvRTk
- <https://www.decisionmakingcapacity.dcj.nsw.gov.au/elearning/pa-ge357945.aspx>

KNOWLEDGE –OPD



OPD TIP—MISPERCEPTIONS

We all experience it. We look into the fridge and cannot find the butter, but it is right at eye level staring us in the face. The same can occur when reading a question. If you expect to see certain word, or even NOT see certain words, your perception will align.

Make certain that before you start your OPD, you are rested and alert. If you get tired, just save and take a break before resuming. Misperception (not recognising what is in front of you) is a human condition.

Read each question carefully and don't rush.

Did you notice I just typed question instead of question?

I have had repeated messages asking for assistance when a Celebrant has been confused by a double negative or is required to select an 'incorrect' answer to a question.

Question 61 in the OPD is another of the questions that some are misreading. They are simply not seeing the word 'NOT' in the question.

Make certain that you read the question closely and note that some questions include three statements that are consistent with the Act and one that is not.

Question 61 asks for a title for a document that, under the Act, should **NOT** be used. Many are NOT seeing the word 'NOT' and so here is the question:

Q61: Which of the following is NOT an appropriate title for a document commemorating a commitment ceremony?

Option 'a' is obviously an appropriate title for a document commemorating a commitment ceremony as are two others but there is only one option that can NOT be used for a document commemorating a commitment ceremony.

- a. Celebration of Commitment.
- b. Certificate of Promise.
- c. Commitment Certificate.
- d. Celebration of Marriage.



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HISTORY™

KNOWLEDGE
OPD

THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE UNDER THE MARRIAGE ACT



When Federal Attorney-General [Philip Ruddock](#) introduced the *Marriage Amendment Bill 2004* to incorporate a definition of marriage into the *Marriage Act 1961* and to outlaw the recognition of same-sex marriages lawfully entered into in foreign jurisdictions, he argued that

it was necessary to protect the institution of marriage, and to ensure that the definition would be beyond legal challenge through the application of common law. The amendment incorporated a definition of marriage into section 5 of the Act, known as the *Interpretation* section:

marriage means the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.

and inserted a new section:

88EA Certain unions are not marriages

A union solemnised in a foreign country between:

- (a) a man and another man; or
- (b) a woman and another woman;

must not be recognised as a marriage in Australia.^[17]

Labor Party shadow attorney-general [Nicola Roxon](#) said that the Labor Party would not oppose the amendment, arguing that the amendment did not affect the legal situation of same-sex relationships, merely putting into statute law what was already common law. Likewise minor parties Family First and the Christian Democrats supported the bill, as did the junior party in the Coalition government, the National Party.

The Australian Greens opposed the bill, calling it the "Marriage Discrimination Act". The Australian Democrats also opposed the bill. Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett (pictured) stated that the legislation devalued his marriage, and Greens Senator Bob Brown referred to John Howard and the legislation as "hateful".^{[20][21][22]}



During the bill's second reading,

Continued from previous page

KNOWLEDGE OPD

Then Labor MP Anthony Albanese said:



"what has caused offence is why the government has rushed in this legislation in what is possibly the last fortnight of parliamentary sittings. This bill is a result of 30 bigoted backbenchers who want to press buttons out there in the community."^[23]

It was not until 9th December 2017, that the Marriage Act was again amended to provide for marriage equality in Australia changing the definition of marriage to:

'the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life?'

In a marriage ceremony, all celebrants (other than ministers of religion of recognised denominations (category A celebrants) and ADF chaplains and marriage officers) are required to inform the parties to the marriage of the nature of marriage according to Australian law, in the terms set out in subsection 46(1) of the Marriage Act, which reads:

Certain authorised celebrants to explain nature of marriage relationship

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), before a marriage is solemnised by an authorised celebrant, not being a minister of religion of a recognised denomination, the authorised celebrant shall say to the parties, in the presence of the witnesses, the words:

"I am duly authorised by law to solemnise marriages according to law."

"Before you are joined in marriage in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses, I am to remind you of the solemn and binding nature of the relationship into which you are now about to enter."

"Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of 2 people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.";

or words to that effect.

GUIDELINES

23: Grounds on which marriages are void

- (1) A marriage that took place on or after 20 June 1977 and before the commencement of section 13 of the *Marriage Amendment Act 1985* is void where:
- either of the parties was, at the time of the marriage, lawfully married to some other person;
 - the parties are within a **prohibited relationship**;
 - by reason of section 48 the marriage is not a valid marriage;

- (d) the consent of either of the parties was not a real consent because:

- it was obtained by duress or fraud;
- that party was mistaken as to the identity of the other party or as to the nature of the ceremony performed; or
- that party was mentally incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony; or

- (e) either of the parties was not of marriageable age; and not otherwise.

- (2) **Marriages of parties within a prohibited relationship are marriages:**

- (a) **between a person and an ancestor or descendant of the person; or**

- (b) **between a brother and a sister (whether of the whole blood or the half-blood).**

- (3) **Any relationship specified in subsection (2) includes a relationship traced through, or to, a person who is or was an adopted child, and, for that purpose, the relationship between an adopted child and the adoptive parent, or each of the adoptive parents, of the child, shall be deemed to be or to have been the natural relationship of child and parent.**

- (4) Nothing in subsection (3) makes it lawful for a person to marry a person whom the first-mentioned person could not lawfully have married if that subsection had not been enacted.

- (5) For the purposes of this section:

- (a) a person who has at any time been adopted by another person shall be deemed to remain the adopted child of that other person notwithstanding that any order by which the adoption was effected has been annulled, cancelled or discharged or that the adoption has for any other reason ceased to be effective; and

- (b) a person who has been adopted on more than one occasion shall be deemed to be the adopted child of each person by whom he or she has been adopted.

- (6) For the purposes of this section:

adopted, in relation to a child, means adopted under the law of any place (whether in or out of Australia) relating to the adoption of children.

ancestor, in relation to a person, means any person from whom the first-mentioned person is descended including a parent of the first-mentioned person.

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**KNOWLEDGE OPD—VOID MARRIAGES
(& WHO CAN MARRY WHOM)**

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ancestor, in relation to a person, means any person from whom the first-mentioned person is descended including a parent of the first-mentioned person.

Marketing

A professor explained marketing to students

You see a gorgeous person at a party, and you say, "I am rich, marry me". **That is Direct marketing**

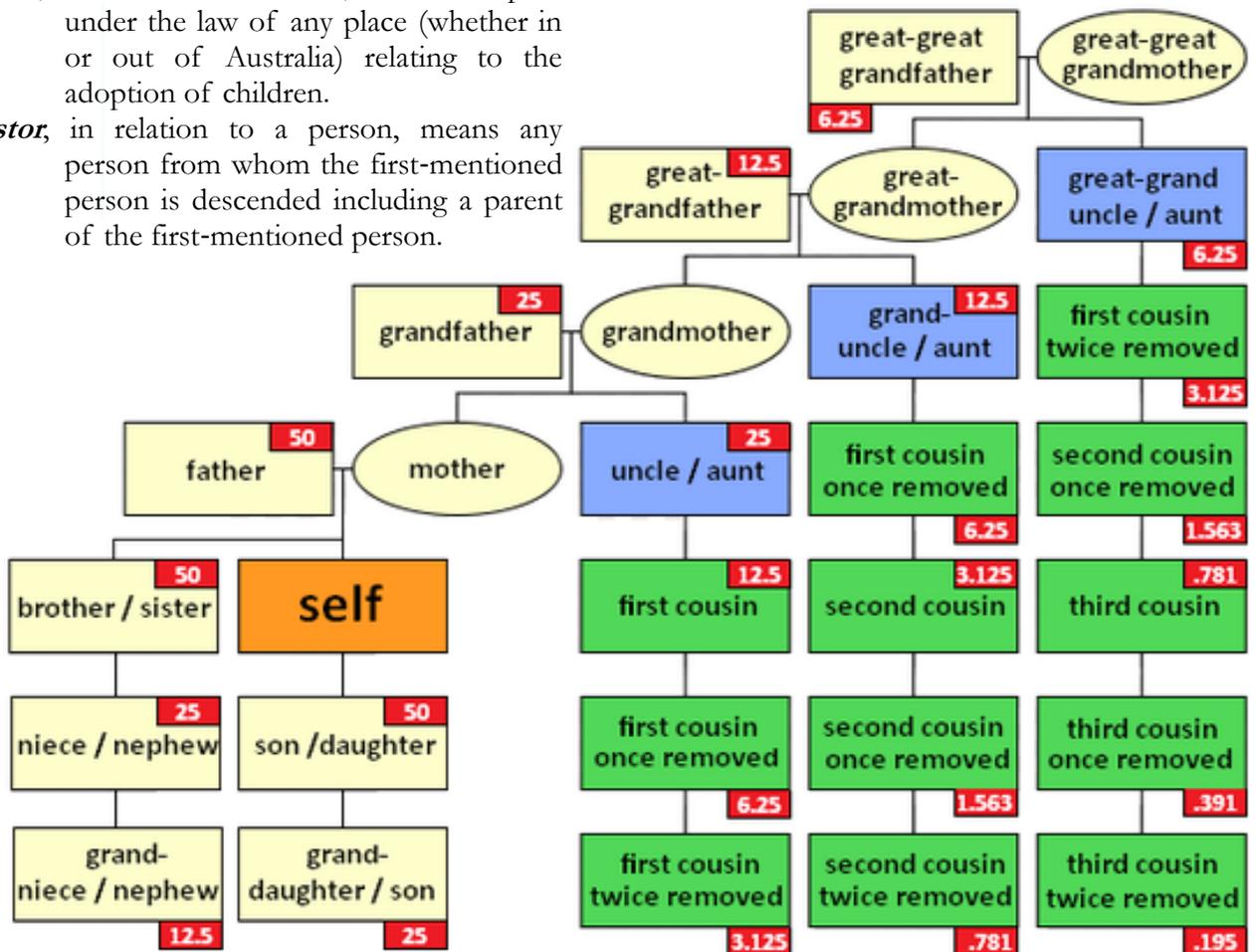
You attend a party and your friend goes up to the most attractive person to point you out, and says, "That person is very rich and you should marry". **That is Advertising**

A very attractive person walks up to you to say "I know you are very rich, can you marry me". **That is Brand recognition**

You say to a very attractive person, "I am very rich, marry me" but you are slapped. **That is Customer feedback.**

You say to a very attractive person, "I'm very rich, marry me" and you are then introduced to the spouse. **That's a demand and supply gap.**

Before you can say "I'm very rich, marry me", your own spouse arrives. **That is a restriction on entering a new market.**

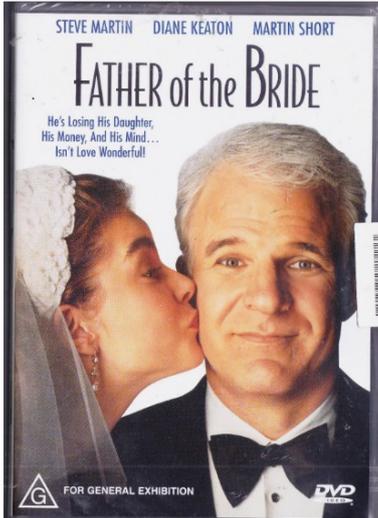




changed or has not changed in weddings from 1950 to 1991 and will give you, the Celebrant viewer, an opportunity to compare your current weddings. I didn't know there was a 2021 remake with Andy Garcia and Gloria Estefan which looks through the prism of multiple relationships within a big, sprawling Cuban-American clan, so maybe a binge watch if you can find them on a streaming service, or on YouTube, or DVD if you still have a player.



- <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101862/>
- [https://www.dvdlend.com.au/products/Father-Of-The-Bride-\(2022\).html?gad_source=5&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI7q-6ivFjAMV16lmAh3GVikiEAQYASABEgRHPD_BwE](https://www.dvdlend.com.au/products/Father-Of-The-Bride-(2022).html?gad_source=5&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI7q-6ivFjAMV16lmAh3GVikiEAQYASABEgRHPD_BwE)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_of_the_Bride_\(1950_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_of_the_Bride_(1950_film))
- <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/wedding/planning/g32435048/wedding-movie/>



Father of the Bride (1991) is a classic romantic comedy in which we follow George Banks (Steve Martin) as he navigates the chaos of his daughter's wedding. With an all-star cast including Diane Keaton who play his wife Nina Banks, Martin Short who is the extraordinary wedding planner, and Kimberley Williams, this film is a heartwarming tale of family, love, and the ups and downs of planning a wedding and a nervous father unready to face the fact that his daughter is now a woman.

The preparations for the extravagant wedding provide loads of comic moments but from a Celebrants view, we get to see how others perceive and act upon wedding traditions.

Significantly, it is a remake of the Spencer Tracy classic movie of the same name, **Father of the Bride (1950)**, in which Joan Bennet plays Nina Banks his wife and Elizabeth Taylor played the daughter Kay Banks, and so watching both will give you a perspective of what has



COMPASS, Series 39, Island Of The Dead

Duration: 27 minutes 42 seconds

- <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/compass/series/39/video/RN2411H004S00>
- https://iview.abc.net.au/show/compass?utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared

Compass is an Australian weekly news-documentary program exploring faith, values, ethics, and religion from around the world. It airs on **ABC TV** every Sunday at 6:30pm, with a repeat broadcast on Wednesdays at 1:30 pm, and is available on demand via **ABC iview**.

Compass has always been a valuable program for Celebrants, enlightening the viewer on rituals, culture and religion.

In Series 39 , Compass reveals that Kangaroo Island, is known to First Nation people as the *Island of the Dead*, and that locals are reimagining funerals. As the island's first "death doula" begins her work with the terminally ill, the community foster their own death rituals.

Worth a watch for any funeral Celebrant.

What movie or TV show have you seen, or what book have you read that has in some way given you inspiration as a Celebrant? Tell us about it and your article will appear on this page.

Bridesmaid's dresses

THE BEST BRIDESMAID DRESS COLOURS FOR A WINTER WEDDING

Sometimes, as Celebrants, we are asked for advice on wedding matters that are of no concern to us as Celebrants performing a ceremony..

- Which side does everyone sit?
- Which side should the Groom stand?
- Should the Bride give a speech at the reception?
- How many bridesmaids should I have?
- What colour should the bridesmaids wear?

These questions, whilst pertinent to the day, are of no legal consequence and as we are there to perform a legal role, there is no reason to answer them from a legal stance but they are indications that the bride or groom are anxious or lacking in confidence and your ability to answer them could instil some level of confidence and of course, goodwill.

Regular readers of this newsletter will already know that in past editions we have looked at bridal customs, jewellery, and even shoes but when we go back 600 years, Bridesmaids were all dressed identically to the bride complete with veils to conceal their identity so that the veil not only protected the bride from evil spirits but concealed her among the wedding party because bride's were not always willing participants or might have been the key to accessing the family wealth, and so a prized bride would be 'hidden' among the bridesmaids.

To this day, bridesmaid still often dress alike, though not usually the same as the bride, and some had for tears, especially in the 1960s- 1980s, the subject of considerable complaint and often described by bridesmaids as 'hideous' and unwearable to any event other than the wedding but they complied simply to honour the bride's wishes.

There have been some changes. Bridal gowns are now the height of fashion and bridesmaids' dresses are following suit.

That being said, a good starting point for choosing a dress, is choosing the colour.

According to Sofia Deeb in an article for The Knot, the palette of your wedding party attire will likely determine the rest of your decor, like flowers, tablescapes and even lighting. So, once you select a colour for bridesmaid dresses, the rest of the wedding decor and colour palette begins to 'seamlessly', fall into place in this article.

According to Sofia Deeb, bright tropical hues work well in summer, pastels lend themselves to spring, warmer tones channel the colours of autumn and rich jewel tones are best in winter which runs for three months from 1st June.

The location of the wedding is another factor to consider.

Beach weddings are common on the South Coast of NSW, and so a shade that will stand out against the whitish sand, works well, e.g. fuschia or orange.

If your wedding is taking place in one of the many rainforests and national park bush surrounds, neutral-coloured gowns may work better so as not to clash with the surrounding greenery but for a wedding at an upscale venue, a classic black dress adds a touch of classic drama.

An option is a maid of honour in florals but the rest of the wedding party in solid colours.

In 2024, The Knot says that Bridesmaid dresses in shades of sage green were on-trend.

When you think of winter bridesmaid dresses, you probably think of rich jewel tones, like emerald and sapphire, as well as classics, like navy and black but a statement can be made with a shimmering champagne-coloured gowns, rather than winter white, in a seasonally-appropriate fabrics, such as like crepe, velvet and satin.

JJ's House, in an article titled *The Ultimate Guide to Choosing Wedding Colours for Every Season*, agree with The Knot but suggest you think beyond festive (northern hemisphere) holiday green and red and so consider these formal winter colour palettes that are appropriate for all frosty months:

- Feature regency (purple) to make your special day majestic. Adding a fainter lilac tint will soften your colour scheme while royal blue ensures a wintry spin.
- Create chilly magic with delightful orchid (violet) as the attention grabber. Slip in arctic-looking sky blue and fuchsia accents for an enchanting impression.
- Set a refined tone by mixing grape with shimmery silver and dusty rose frills as contrasts.
- Play peacock (deep green) and memorable mulberry (purple) against lighter champagne. Everyone will enjoy that assortment's ageless delicacy.

For a sophisticated take on yesteryear's winter wonders, try dark green, rich gold, and elegant black.

Winter weddings offer the perfect opportunity for rich jewel tones and a dark, moody colour palette, or shades of burgundy, gold, evergreen, navy and eggplant.

There are a few interesting colour choices and styles on the next page

For samples referred to in this article, go to:

- <https://www.theknot.com/content/what-colour-bridesmaid-dresses-should-you-have>
- https://www.jjshouse.com/blog/seasonal-color-palettes-vintage-nuptials?currency=AUD&gntk=s&gkey=&ggt=2&ggplm=&country=AU&gad_source=5&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI5YONjdrRjAMVJg-Dax274yyeEAAYAiAAEgKl9vD_BwE

Continued next page

H Bridesmaid's dresses

HISTORY. In past editions we have looked at bridal customs, jewellery, and bridal dresses but we haven't discussed in detail, dresses worn by bridesmaids. Bridesmaids are traditionally the closest confidants of the bride, helping her ready for the big event. Originally they all dressed identically to the bride complete with veils to conceal the Bride's identity. There were several explanations, one being that the veil protected the bride from evil spirits but bride's were not always willing participants or might have been the key to accessing the family wealth when these traditions evolved and so a kidnapped or a prized bride would be 'hidden' among the bridesmaids. To this day, bridesmaid still often dress alike, though not usually the same as the bride, and some were the subject of complaint. The dresses worn are indicative of the fashion of the day, so see if you can decide on the era in which these were taken?



Are these curtains, cults or readying for a human sacrifice?



COORDINATOR COMMENTS



The Greek philosopher Socrates told us that *“The secret of happiness is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less”*. Clearly, he was not a celebrant relying on bookings to ensure and increase income. We always have to plan ahead, advertise to be seen and not be invisible, and constantly

promote ourselves. That is the nature of being in business.

I remember being at a local small business network meeting at which webpages and social media were being reviewed and one young man who worked on a computer screen and had never contemplated marriage or booking a Celebrant, suggested that my own social media had too many selfies of couples with the Celebrant, enjoying ceremonies and that the pics should be more obscure, highlighting the product but not my involvement. I had a chuckle because the product is the Celebrant and the ceremony is the outcome.

That same week, a couple became very excited when I announced the inevitable selfie at the end of their ceremony and they enthusiastically explained that a major factor in their booking me was to ensure they would appear in my gallery of beaming and happy couples.

I think back to my marketing days and recall that absolutely every sale was not made on the basis of practicality or economics, but that the final factor was always ‘emotional’; people want to buy because they want to feel good and confident about themselves in their purchase. Price, from that perspective, is never the main factor but may simply be used as a justification for the purchase. Let’s explore that a little further. A couple create a budget but has underestimated the Celebrant fee and so they will go with the cheapest in whom they are uncertain and lack confident or will they go with the one that instils joy and complete confidence? Joy and confidence are always the winners, but it is of course up to the Celebrant to ensure that confidence is generated.

You generate that confidence by not only being knowledgeable and confident in yourself, but by asking questions and listening. Offer limited choices so as not to confuse and let the couple tell you what they want so that confidence is naturally generated.

Instead of making a statement that they must say or do a certain thing, ask if that is what they want to do, e.g. *“do you want to walk down the aisle together or will one or either of you have an escort?”* The answer will almost always be that the groom will be at the front and that the bride will be escorted by her father but having been offered simple choices and having made a confident decision, the confidence grows.

At the end of the conversation, they will feel confident that they have been listened to, confident that they have made correct choices and will have confidence in you as their celebrant. I will finish with a quote from Bob Smith:

“If you don’t have a positive outlook in life, life is terrible but be positive and life is wonderful.”





Renew now



SEE PAGE
5-6 FOR
DETAILS

[Click here to find out:](#)

[What's On In The Next 30 Days - Shoalhaven - South Coast NSW](#)