

October 2025

Volume 4, Issue 9

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

**An update from your
AMC South Coast
Coordinator,
Lou Szymkow**

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



COVER PICTURE. Wendy & Pravin on their wedding day

**Inside this
issue:**

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- **And so much more**

How to choose a **LOGO STYLE** FOR YOUR BRAND

Last month you read about 'Hero Images' but questions were asked about logos and so this month, let's explore the Celebrant logo concept.

Any advertiser will tell you that having a logo is an integral part of making a brand successful one. Certainly it works for many larger organisations, particularly multinationals in different countries as the logo crosses language barriers and borders.

A logo grabs attention, makes a strong first impression, and is the foundation of a corporation's brand identity, so long as it is memorable, separates you from competition, and fosters brand loyalty. Advocates also argue that having a logo is expected by the audience.



So how does that fit with Celebrants who have just the one product being ceremonies, and are the Celebrants themselves, the brand?

Celebrants who have a logo, display it at every opportunity and on every possible surface, on certificate covers, all stationery,



**UPCOMING
Sth COAST
MEETINGS**

Christmas meeting —to be decided.

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webpages, social media and on clothing at, and outside of ceremonies. They look great as decoration at expos and on lecterns of stationery but do they attract business?

We differentiate different celebrancy associations by their logos but are Celebrant clients attracted by a logo?

There are arguments for and against a logo for Celebrants in that repeat clients will already have contact details and may not be attracted by a logo at all, whereas advocates for Celebrant logos will point out that it gives them a professional look.

One difficulty with choosing a logo design is that with so many Celebrants worldwide now, originality can be extremely challenging. The writer engaged several different agencies to design a logo but of the 7, 6 were almost identical, utilising existing templates readily available online, while the seventh researched the concept and said that the only image that worked was the celebrant's face because that offered recognition, whereas loving or compassionate logos only resulted in the potential client determining what was already known or expected i.e. they were seeking a celebrant.

For those who swing in the direction of wanting a logo, let's explore the concept.

According to Wix, the golden rules of logo design are

Simplicity: A good logo should be simple and easy to understand. Avoid complex designs that can be difficult to remember or reproduce.

Memorability: A good logo should be memorable and easy to recognize. Aim for a design that is unique and stands out from the competition.

Versatility: A good logo should be versatile and able to be used in a variety of mediums and sizes. It should look good in both black and white and colour, and it should be scalable to any size without losing its impact.

Relevance: A good logo should be relevant to your brand and target audience. It should reflect your brand values and personality, and it should appeal to your customers.

Wix says that before creating a logo, you should have a clear understanding of your brand and target audience. You should also have a good understanding of the principles of design including:

- What are your brand values?
- What is your target audience?
- What is your brand personality?
- What colours and fonts represent your brand?
- What are your competitors' logos like?



COLOR EMOTION GUIDE



Wix says that your logo is like a handshake—it's the first impression of your brand. It should reflect who you are and connect with your audience.

Wix says you start by defining what you stand for. Are you bold and edgy or classy and trustworthy? Think about your audience too. Use fonts, shapes and colours that match your vibe. Wix also says to skip generic icons or overused templates and focus on fresh ideas that stand out. Once you have a design you like, get feedback from others to ensure it's working as intended.

- **Start with your brand identity:** Understand your values, voice and what sets you apart before jumping into design.
- **Design for your audience:** Pick colours, shapes and fonts that resonate with the people you want to reach.
- **Make it flexible and scalable:** Your logo should look great at any size, in colour or black and white, and across different formats.

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- **Be original:** Skip the clip art and trendy designs—go for something that's uniquely yours.
- **Get honest feedback:** Share your top choices with others and listen to what they think before locking it in.
- **Keep it simple:** Clean, easy-to-read designs are more memorable and practical.
- **Let colour work for you:** Choose colours that reflect your brand's personality and vibe.
- **Experiment fearlessly:** Try different styles and directions until you land on the one that feels right.

According to Megan Morahan of Vista Print, small business owners (Celebrants fit into that category), we can appreciate the importance of standing out and making a lasting first impression. An impactful and recognisable logo helps people remember your company, but creating one from scratch or refreshing your current identity can be challenging.

Here are Megan's top tips on how to choose a logo for your business:

1. Understand the purpose of your logo.
2. Use a colour that makes your logo stand out.
3. Get familiar with different types of logos.
4. Balance your design elements.
5. Make your logo versatile.

Get help from an expert.

Let's explore each point.

1. Understand the purpose of your logo.

Your logo acts as a visual representation of what your company does and helps existing and potential customers recognise your business.

An effective small business logo design:

- **Symbolises your business values.**
- **Increases credibility in the eyes of potential customers.**
- **Serves as a visual keepsake for customers.**

If you're starting a business, don't worry about what your startup logo looks like just yet. Instead, ask yourself what you want people to feel when they first encounter your company. Consider the words they would use to describe using your products or services. These words are the essence of your business.

Then, you can associate those words or feelings with a look and feel. It's important to create a list of business attributes to give you a clear communication goal.

2. Use a colour that makes your logo stand out.

The subject of typical emotional associations with colours is fascinating, especially seeing how they differ between cultures. A lot of our customers use

black and blue, which is probably due to seeing so many established corporations using these colours — and for good reason! Black is often used as an expression of strength, sophistication, tradition and trust. Blue is typically associated with competence, trust, dependability and security.

Think about what you want your logo to say and how colour associations will affect your message. Then, consider the type of logo that best suits your business.

3. Get familiar with different types of logos.

There are three basic types of logos — check them all out and decide which one is best for your business.

- i) text-only or wordmark identity, e.g. a name.
- ii) a monogram or lettermark, uses the first letters of the company name in a visual way.
- iii) Combines a symbol with words. The logo is often made up of a shape that acts as a visual clue to the service or product you offer.

Type 1 - Text-only or Wordmark



Type 2 - Monogram or Lettermark



Type 3 - Symbol and Word



4. Balance your design elements.

Megan says, “if your company is quirky and fun, you can try fresh, unique fonts paired with dynamic colours and symbols. Or, if your company is more traditional, you could balance your logo by using a classic font and a more conventional colour palette.”

5. Make your logo versatile.

You may want to add your logo to the side of your vehicle with a car door magnet or vinyl decal but make sure all text is clear and easy to read, even from a distance! Be sure to test the legibility of your logo from various distances.

6. Get help from an expert.

If you don't feel confident designing your own logo and have a limited marketing budget, you're not alone.

If you want something unique or more customised, from Vista, check out [Vista's Logomaker](#) for plenty of personalised business logo ideas. Or, find a Vista designer to work one-on-one with you.

https://www.vistaprint.com.au/hub/how-to-choose-a-logo?utm_id=3BPS0006B8605EAF9D840&coupon=&partner=google&ps_vtp=21326424132|||c|9071903||x&ps_vtp2=g|||||&gad_source=5&gad_campaignid=21332702873&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIz_nyyPvCjwMV5KVmA2h2pvRSCEAAAYAAAEgIj_D_BwE

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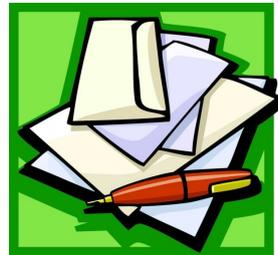
Here are more tips from Wix, which you will find on the **Wix Blog**, on 'How to make a logo'

- ◇ [Explore conceptual icons](#)
- ◇ [Use the space you have](#)
- ◇ [Play around with caps or lowercase](#)
- ◇ [Consider handwritten fonts](#)
- ◇ [Balance your tagline](#)
- ◇ [Adjust your name and tagline](#)
- ◇ [Let your logo breathe](#)
- ◇ [Ensure readability](#)
- ◇ [Create a scalable design](#)
- ◇ [Give your background contrast](#)
- ◇ [Align all your elements](#)
- ◇ [Size up your icon](#)
- ◇ [Know your competition](#)
- ◇ [Stay as timeless as possible](#)
- ◇ *Be memorable*

How to choose a logo designer

- Vet their portfolio
- Study their case studies
- Read their testimonials
- Ask about their design process
- See what awards they've won
- Determine if their price reflects value
- Snoop their socials & blog
- Test their customer service
- Evaluate their business professionalism
- ... then decide if they are a right fit.

A Look At The Change In Phone Booths Over The Years



Letters to the Editor feedback

Have you enjoyed reading this newsletter? Have you disagreed with an article or do you have another idea? We are a community of Celebrants and learn from each other. It is your turn to have your say and be published in this newsletter.

The more we learn, the more we discover how much there is to learn, and of course we learn from each other.

What will you write about in this newsletter?

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

By writing your ideas and processes down, you consolidate them; by sharing them with others, you expand and strengthen them. What is common sense and experience to you, may be foreign to another but if you share your thoughts, others can expand on your ideas, and in doing so, help you expand your own ideas further. Email your articles of comments to: alifecelebrant@gmail.com

ONLINE DATING



EXPECTATION

REALITY

Doctor Who fan will immediately get the joke above, me being one, but the reality has changed. A few years ago , couples were embarrassed to reveal that they met online but it seems it is now the most common means of meeting, at least among the majority of my couples. I have even had on bride boast of how many she rejected before finding perfection. and so of course the love story has to be told creatively in reflection.

I mention: *"they searched to world for each other and out of the 8 billion on Earth, they found each other"*





AFP FORCED MARRIAGE

The Australian Federal Police issued a media release on 30th July 2025 to mark United Nations' World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (WDATIP), stating that the number of human trafficking complaints to the AFP has increased, with the AFP receiving 382 reports – 91 being forced marriage allegations – across the 2023-2024 financial year. This is an increase of 42 reports from the previous financial year (2022-2023), when the AFP received 340 reports. However, it remains a crime type that police believe is under-reported.

On 29 July, 2024, a Shepparton woman was sentenced to three years imprisonment for orchestrating the forced marriage of her 20-year-old daughter, That was the first successful conviction and sentencing for forced marriage in Australian history. The forced marriage victim was murdered in Western Australia at the hands of the man she had been forced to marry.

A New South Wales man, 51, was sentenced by the Downing Centre District Court on 4 October, 2024 to a total of three years and four months' imprisonment for both counts, with a non-parole period of one year and 11 months for attempting to orchestrate separate forced marriages for two of his teenage children, who were then aged 15 and 17.

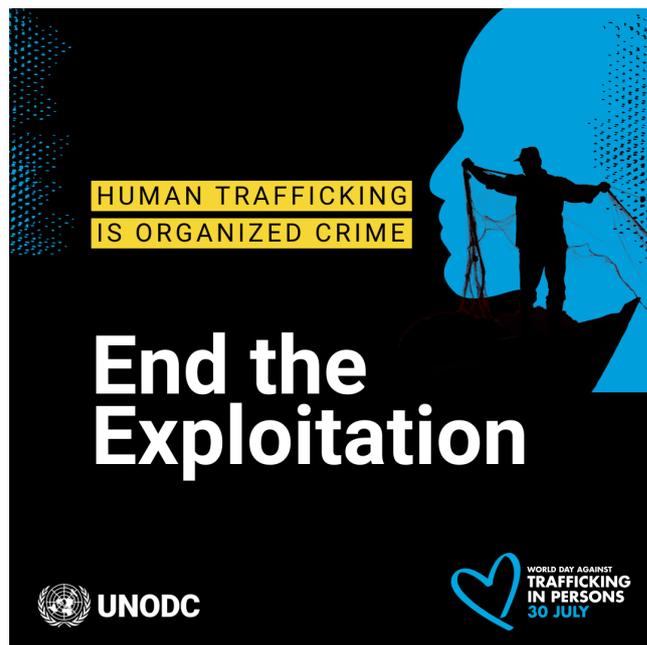
AFP Commander Kate Ferry said Australia was not immune to human trafficking, and the crime was often under-reported because people might not be aware they were victims or that they could seek help from police.

"There are usually two types of forced marriages. One is where unwilling participants are threatened, deceived or coerced to enter a marriage. The other is where someone cannot legally consent to marriage due to their age," Commander Ferry said.

"This crime type is one that generally involves perpetrators offending against younger, more vulnerable family members. In many situations, a young victim does not want their family to be 'in trouble' with police, leading to the offending being unreported."

"The AFP is here to help all victims of human trafficking and we will work tirelessly to ensure the wellbeing of victims who seek to escape their situation. Forced marriage reports are treated on a case-by-case basis to ensure the most appropriate resolution for victims. Each case is treated with compassion, care and respect."

"It is important to remember that not all reports result in a prosecution – sometimes we can get a positive result by helping



a person leave a difficult situation, or by directly educating everyone involved so a marriage doesn't occur."

If you or someone you know is a victim of human trafficking, help is available.

For information and confidential advice, please contact the AFP by calling 131AFP, [Beyond Blue](#) or [My Blue Sky](#).

For more information on human trafficking, including the signs a person may be at risk of being trafficked, visit the [Human trafficking and slavery](#) page on our website.

Articles on Forced marriage and human trafficking:

- In **May, 2024** [a Victorian woman became Australia's first forced marriage conviction](#), after orchestrating the forced marriage of her 20-year-old daughter, who later became a victim of a homicide in Western Australia.
- In **October, 2024** a [NSW man jailed for attempting to orchestrate separate forced marriages](#) for two of his children, who were then 15 and 17. The AFP began an investigation in 2022 after the children escaped from their father's home in regional NSW.
- <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-human-trafficking-day>

Celebrants in Australia are of course required to establish the age of parties to a marriage to ensure eligibility and so are safeguarding against underage marriage; and when Celebrants confirm real & active consent prior to the solemnisation of a marriage they are safeguarding against unwilling participants being threatened, deceived or coerced to enter a marriage.

More on this subject on the next page.....

ATTEMPTED FORCED MARRIAGE

Mother Enam Hmeed is accused of beating daughter after she refused to marry cousin - as Police allegedly find chain padlocked around the young woman's neck

According to multiple press reports, all apparently authored by Tom Wark, on Thursday 25th September 2025, in regard to a court hearing, it is alleged that a woman named Rhonda, aged 21, was beaten against a concrete wall by her mother, Enam Hmeed, aged 45, for not marrying her first cousin and will never set foot in the family home again, a court has been told.

Enam Hmeed, and her husband Mohamed Al-Fadhli were both arrested in April 2025 after police allegedly discovered their daughter Rhonda in their convenience store in western NSW with a metal chain padlocked around her neck.

Police allege Hmeed and Al-Fadhli assaulted their 21-year-old daughter on separate occasions after finding out she was still in contact with her boyfriend, who had asked the parents for permission to marry her.

The marriage proposal had been refused because the father wanted his eldest daughter to marry his brother's son, who was of course Rhonda's first cousin, in an arranged marriage, police say.

After discovering Rhonda on the phone with her boyfriend, Enam Hmeed allegedly grabbed her daughter by the hair and hit her head against a concrete wall multiple times.

The mother is also accused of biting her daughter and attacking her with a garden hose.

Al-Fadhli allegedly travelled nearly 400kms back to the family's shop in Dubbo from Sydney Airport after hearing from his wife about the secret phone call.

The father is accused of locking a silver chain around his daughter before repeatedly attacking her with the hose.

Rhonda was able to contact both police and her boyfriend with a hidden phone and alert them to her condition on two separate occasions on 20th April 2025.

Police attended but the parents denied there were any problems.

Police then called a second time and found Rhonda with a locked chain around her neck, Supreme Court Justice Robertson Wright said.

Hmeed had been living with a friend since being bailed in June and the judge made the comments as he agreed to vary Hmeed's bail conditions on Tuesday 23rd September 2025..



Hmeed had been living with a friend since being bailed in June

The change allows the mother to return to her family home in the Sydney suburb of Yagoona after Rhonda said she would never visit the house.

The case will return to Dubbo Local Court on 23rd October 2025.

Hmeed is facing one charge of detaining in company and a charge of domestic violence assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

No pleas have been entered by the parents but lawyers on Tuesday 23rd September 2025, suggested a contested hearing was on the cards.

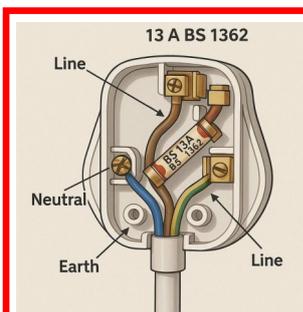
As Celebrants know, Australian law bans marriage between siblings or to a descendent, such as a grandchild, but cousins are permitted to marry if both parties are freely entering the wedlock.

1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

Lifeline 13 11 14

Men's Referral Service 1300 766 491

- [Mother Enam Hmeed is accused of beating daughter after she refused to marry cousin - as cops allegedly find chain padlocked around the young woman's neck | Daily Mail Online](#)
- <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/9074023/mum-allegedly-beat-daughter-for-not-marrying-cousin/>
- https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/subscribe/news/1/?sourceCode=DTW_EB_WRE170_a&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailytelegraph.com.au%2Fnews%2Fns%2Fparents-charged-for-chaining-up-daughter-inside-dubbo-store-to-stop-marriage-they-did-not-approve-of%2Fnews-story%2F2886a51d58efc9028fada757b7c1e72e&mtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=HIGH-Segment-2-SCORE
- <https://au.news.yahoo.com/mum-allegedly-beat-daughter-not-050145193.html?guccounter=1>



This AI generated wiring diagram, highlights what is wrong with using AI for important matters. If someone wired a plug according to this diagram, It would either cause serious damage or possibly cause a death.



Inside Biertan's 15th-Century church is a 300-year-old 'marital prison' used to avert divorce (Credit: Stephen McGrath)

MARITAL PRISON

Divorce in Romania is now somewhat similar to Australia but wasn't always.

A Romania village, Biertan, one of more than 150 villages in Transylvania to still have a fortified church, boasts of an ancient solution to improve marital relations that prevented divorce and it is claimed that the village has had only one divorce in the area for the past 300 years.

Lutheranism, the religion of the Transylvanian Saxons, governed most aspects of village life, and until the 19th century, religious communion was more important in Biertan than administrative or legal marriage.

Priests had the right to officiate religious ceremonies but only bishops could grant divorce, and only under certain circumstances such as adultery. If a couple were granted a divorce, the husband had to pay his wife half of his earnings. If he remarried and then divorced again, his second wife would not be entitled to anything but there was a step beforehand.

Biertan is one of Transylvania's seven Saxon UNESCO World Heritage sites dating back to at least 1283, before it developed into a prominent market town in the 15th century. The locals still sell their wares on the cobbled streets as they did centuries ago. The focal point of the village is a 15th century fortified church on the hilltop with 11metre high stone walls that extend out into the surrounding countryside. Within the grounds is a diminutive building with a small and sparse room, that is now open to the public as a museum. It is known as the 'marital prison'.

Couples who approached the local bishop to seek a divorce would be sent to the 'marital prison' for a maximum of six weeks to iron out their issues. The intention was for the couple to share absolutely everything, as the room, with a low ceiling, contained only one of every item, including the single pillow, plate, spoon, a table, a chair, a storage chest and a small traditional single Saxon bed.

If the couple started to see eye to eye once more, they could leave after only two weeks.

Today, Biertan does not abide so stringently to the old Christian order, but the church is still the cultural centre of the town. Journalist Stephen McGrath, reported for the [BBC](https://www.bbc.com) that Ulf Ziegler, Biertan's current priest, understands the success of the marital prison in practical terms, explaining that he has received requests to use the prison from couples trying to avoid divorce and the priest asserts that this medieval remedy may have some merits for modern marriages too:

"If a couple was locked inside for six weeks, it was very hard for them to have enough food the following year, so there was pressure to get out and to continue to work together ... The reason to remain together was probably not love. The reason was to work and to survive".

"In modern families, there is less and less time for each other, we are more selfish than our ancestors. We suffer from loneliness, which is why today we need to talk more, so we can find out what is important to us and what connects us."



Biertan's Matrimonial Prison. Photo: [Alessio Damato/Wikimedia](https://www.wikimedia.org/wiki/Alessio_Damato)
<https://vardags.com/family-law/romania-marital-prison>
<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20170707-a-medieval-remedy-for-divorce>
<https://www.amusingplanet.com/2022/11/biertans-matrimonial-prison.html>



Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Consultation on revised 'Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for authorised celebrants'

The Attorney-General's Department is seeking Celebrant views on a revised version of the 'Guidelines on the *Marriage Act 1961* for authorised celebrants' (the guidelines).

The guidelines are a key resource to help authorised celebrants understand their legal responsibilities under the *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) and the Marriage Regulations 2017.

MLCS has updated the existing guidelines to reflect recent legislative changes and make information clearer and are seeking feedback from celebrants and other relevant stakeholders on the updated content and structure of this important document.

The department uses 'Citizen Space' to conduct consultations. This consultation is in the form of a survey with free text boxes and radio buttons to provide your views. The draft guidelines document is available for download on the first page, as a PDF or Word document.

Please note that this is a 'private' consultation, which means that it is only accessible to those who have been provided with the relevant URL which is contained in an email sent to Celebrants.

Submissions close at 11.59 pm (Canberra local time) on Monday, 24 November 2025.

For all inquiries relating to this consultation, please contact us using the email address listed on the survey: marriageconsultation@ag.gov.au

MLCS thanks you for your participation in this consultation.

Marriage Law & Celebrants Section
Attorney-General's Department
3-5 National Circuit Barton ACT 2600
T: 1800 550 343 (Tues-Thurs – 10am to 12:30pm – 1pm to 4pm Canberra local time)

- ◇ [Record of use of Form 15 Marriage Certificates](#)
- ◇ [Marriage forms](#)
- ◇ [Newsletters](#)
- ◇ [Downloads](#)
- ◇ [Contact details](#)
- ◇ [Related links](#)

Attorney-General's Department and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meeting Minutes

You can access the minutes of meetings at this link on the AG webpage:

<https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/attorney-generals-department-and-marriage-celebrant-associationsnetworks-meeting-minutes>

Certificate Confusion

- [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](#)

Perhaps BDMs selling non-legal 'ceremonial certificates' has confused some celebrants into wrongly thinking that the Form 15 issued to couples at ceremonies, carries no legal significance and is only 'ceremonial' (for show).

If you read the back of the certificate you will find the wording that confirms that the Certificate is issued in accordance with the Marriage Act. It is proof of marriage but not of identity.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Marriage Act 1961

Certificate of Marriage

I, _____
having authority under the *Marriage Act 1961* to solemnise marriages hereby certify that I have this day at _____

duly solemnised marriage in accordance with the provisions of that Act
between _____
and _____
in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

Dated this _____ day of _____ in the year _____

Signature of Celebrant _____

Signature of Witness to the Marriage _____ WITNESS _____ WITNESS _____

UNIQUE DOCUMENT NUMBER HERE

Under Section 45 of the *Marriage Act 1961* this certificate is conclusive evidence that your marriage has been solemnised in accordance with that section. It is an important document and you should keep it in a safe place with other official documents.

The certificate does not provide conclusive evidence of the identity of either of the parties to your marriage. In some situations you may be asked to produce a registered copy of your marriage certificate obtained from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages of the State or Territory in which you were married.

REVISITING NEW BDM PASSWORD & MFA



NEW BDM PASSWORD REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEGUN FOR SOME

Celebrants have already been receiving notices to update their Lifelink password. Note that whilst you can change your password at any time, you do not have to update to the new password requirements until advised to do so. Celebrants who have an email received notice have discovered that they cannot update until the specified date and that once that date arrives, the update is compulsory as they cannot complete the login otherwise.

The new password requirements are:

- ⇒ Minimum of 15 characters in length
- ⇒ Must not contain your account name or parts of your full name
- ⇒ Must contain three (3) out of the following four (4) categories for complexity
 - ◇ at least one number (0-9)
 - ◇ at least one uppercase characters (A - Z)
 - ◇ at least one lowercase characters (a - z)
 - ◇ at least one special character e.g.
!@#%&^*+=`|\(){}[];":'<>.,?/

⇒ [Click her for the Tutorial video on how to](#)

MULTI-FACTOR

AUTHENTICATION FOR LOGIN

In addition to changing your password, the NSW BDM is introducing Multifactor Authentication (MFA) for when you log into the Lifelink.

In addition to your username and your new password, you will use an authenticator mobile application (app) on a separate device e.g. your phone

NSW BDM recommends your downloading one of the supported authenticator apps below if you don't have one already:

- ⇒ Okta Verify
- ⇒ Google Authenticator
- ⇒ Microsoft Authenticator.



Phil Timbrell has written an article on his experience with MFA, offering a few tips. See the next page.

WHAT IS MFA & 2FA?

- **Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)**
- **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)**

Identity theft and hacking (unauthorised account access) has become a serious threat. To combat this, an additional layer of security is being added by most businesses and government bodies.

- Single layer identification requires a password or code but not both
- Two-factor authentication (2FA) requires users to present two types of authentication, e.g. password and a code
- MFA requires users to present at least two, if not more types of authentication. e.g. password, a code generated by an independent device/fob or an app.

This means that all 2FA is an MFA, but not all MFA is a 2FA.

Whilst a hacker might somehow access one device or an account, they would have to gain access to two of your devices in order to bypass 2FA and may have to hack three devices to overcome MFA, which is far more difficult., hence, you can (and should) use 2FA/MFA for all of your online accounts.

At first we simply needed to enter a short and uncomplicated password, usually about 6-8 numbers

or letters. Then passwords necessarily became more complicated requiring letters, numbers and symbols.

We have now moved on to a second level.

This second layer is two-factor authentication (2FA) otherwise known as Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA).

Quite simply, when your password is entered, the webpage automatically sends a random code to your chosen device, fob, or app, or may send a signal to your app to cause it to generate a random code

You then have to enter that random code on the login screen to verify your identity.

[9 Cybersecurity Tips to Stay Protected in 2023](#)

[Use Two-Factor Authentication \(2FA\)](#)

[Use Strong Passwords and a Password Manager](#)

[Double-Check That Link Before You Click](#)

[Use a VPN When On Public Wi-Fi](#)

[Keeps Apps and Devices Up-to-Date](#)

[Don't Jailbreak Your iPhone](#)

[Don't Store Sensitive Info on Your Phone \(and Always Use a Passcode Lock\)](#)

[Use Privacy-Focused Apps](#)

[Secure Your Local Network](#)

More tips on the next page.....

REVISITING NEW BDM PASSWORD & MFA



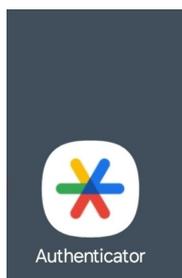
MFA with Lifelink (NSW)

A few tips

By Phil Timbrell

For reasons I cannot explain, I was chosen to be an early bird to implement Multifactor Authentication (MFA) on Lifelink. The BDM have chosen the following apps:

- ⇒ Okta Verify
- ⇒ Google Authenticator
- ⇒ Microsoft Authenticator.



Having an Android phone and Windows 11, I opted to use the Google Authenticator downloaded from the Google Play Store.

Be careful as there are other authenticator apps out there that are not listed by NSW BDM. Do not use one of those as there are some created with malicious intent.

On attempting to log in to Lifelink I was confronted with a QR code and found that it is impossible to login without then implementing MFA.

So I fired up Google Authenticator, pointed the camera of my phone to the screen and clicked to 'add Lifelink'.

I then saw a 6 digit number on the screen of my phone which I then entered on my PC screen BUT it did not work.

So I tried a few more times keying the numbers in with no success and then suddenly success.

Why?

Using Windows on my computer, I saw that there was a slightly different time on my screen, when compared to the time to my phone.

I right clicked the time on the bottom right of the PC screen and made sure that the time was set automatically, and then I clicked on the icon that read "synchronise time".

Once I did that my phone and computer started showing identical times.

I cannot speak for Apple but you can download the app of your choosing from the Apple App Store.

I have not yet reset my password but will do that once the wedding season has passed in case there are any hiccups.

I might add that responses from the MFA help line have been fairly quick, maybe a day or 2.

That email address is:

eregistry-support@customerservice.nsw.gov.au

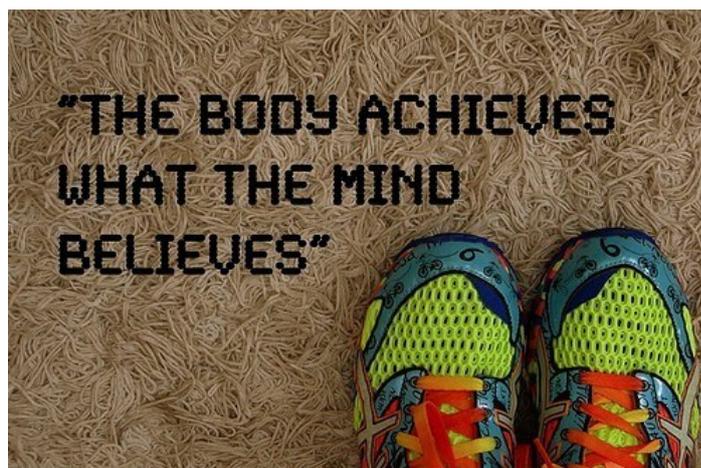
TIPS

- When it is your turn for MFA, there is no grace period.
- You will have to access the QR code using your authenticator app,
- Then type in a code that will appear on your phone,
- You then log out and log back in, otherwise you will not have access.
- Each time you subsequently login, open the authenticator code and then enter the code that appears on your phone, onto the log in screen.

TIPS FROM GOOGLE

- With Google Authenticator, you can synchronize your verification codes across all your devices, simply by signing in to your Google Account
- To use this feature you must have:
 - * Version 6.0 or above on Android
 - * Version 4.0 or above on Ios
- **Important:** The time correction setting is no longer available in version 7.0. As Phil discovered, the app now uses the time setting on your operating system.
- You can still generate codes without an internet connection or mobile service.
- You can use Google Authenticator even without a Google Account:
 - * When you first open the app, tap **Use without an account.**
 - * If you already saved codes to your Google Account, at the top right corner of the home screen, tap your profile picture, then tap **Use Authenticator without an account.**
 - ◇ This action will remove codes from all of your Google Accounts and store them on your device. Codes will not be available on your other devices.

<https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/1066447?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid>





With Lifelink in NSW and other states switching to online registrations, the probability of documents being lost in the mail has

been removed. The Act still requires three marriage certificates as follows:

1. The official certificate of marriage (the registration copy) with the declaration of no legal impediment must be forwarded by the celebrant to the BDM in the state or territory where the marriage was solemnised. This must occur within 14 days of the marriage, together with the other required documents.
2. The second official certificate must be kept by a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant for six years and by a minister of religion for a recognised denomination indefinitely. A Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant may destroy the second official marriage certificate after six years although they are not obliged to do so.
3. The Form 15 certificate of marriage (the parties' certificate), should be handed to one of the parties, the details having previously been recorded on the record-keeping sheet.

The names of each must be identical, and each of the parties to the marriage, the two witnesses and the celebrant must sign all three marriage certificates immediately after the solemnisation of the marriage.

All records must be securely stored.

Whilst the Marriage Act Guidelines tell us that the authorised celebrant must keep the record of the use of the Form 15 certificate and also the Marriage Register or second marriage certificate for six years (see [Part 6.5](#) of the guidelines) we know that record can be stored electronically and some Celebrants do keep their records much longer.

Up until a few years the Official Marriage Certificate (OCM) retained by the Celebrant was slightly different to that sent to the BDM but they were eventually made identical and so many celebrants now question why we still need to have three OCMs. The simple answer is that the Marriage Act still requires it and we must comply with the Act but a broader explanation is that until all states have online registration, the extra copy still has a place and need.

Robert Smith, recently retired after 50 years of Celebrancy, recalled that many years ago he was in the habit of posting marriage records in batches to the NSW BDM, but he retained his own copies, archiving them after 6 years. He went on to say that he was at one time contacted by a former bride some 10 years after her ceremony. The Groom had died and she needed to submit a copy of the marriage certificate to the probate

court however the NSW BDM could not find a record of the registration. Robert was contacted and upon checking his records, found that he had posted the marriage records in a batch to the BDM and was able to produce the required evidence

that enabled the belated registration of the marriage. Robert had of course complied with the

Act in that he had submitted the records but the records were somehow lost in transit. He gave the BDM the entire list from that batch and it was discovered that none of the marriages in that batch had been recorded. He handed over the evidence to enable the BDM to correct that. Robert's diligence in keeping the records for longer than required saved the day.



Keeping personal information safe

It is essential that couples feel their ceremony is in safe hands, which includes the safety of their personal information. Under the Code of Practice in Schedule 2 of the Marriage Regulations 2017, celebrants are required to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the parties, including by:

- (i) arranging for appropriate facilities to interview parties
- (ii) dealing appropriately with personal documents and personal information
- (iii) maintaining appropriate facilities for the secure storage of records, and
- (iv) ensuring the return of all personal documents belonging to the parties as soon as practicable (unless it is necessary to keep the documents for the ceremony).

Whether on paper or electronically, information must be protected and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet or on a computer with a strong password. Don't forget to take reasonable measures to ensure personal conversations with the couple relating to the solemnisation remain private and are not overheard by third parties. Not remaining aware of electronic, physical, and spatial considerations can increase the risk of personal client information becoming compromised by a third party. Need more information about best security practices for small businesses? Please visit the [Small Business Cyber Security Guide](#), Protect your customers' information at [Business.gov.au](#), and [ID match](#)

- [Newsletter – Marriage Celebrant Matters: Autumn 2025 edition](#)

Sovereign Citizens



In August, Senior Constable Thompson and Senior Constable de Waart-Hottart, were both shot dead at point blank range, when serving a search warrant regarding sexual assault charges, in Victoria upon a man who is purported to represent himself as a sovereign citizen (SovCit). It may be helpful to revisit and update a past article on the sovereign citizen movement and consider how Celebrants might act in an encounter in relation to a ceremony.

Some explain that if you are a 'sovereign', meaning autonomous, you cannot claim then to also be a 'citizen' and so argue that it is actually wrong to use the term however the **sovereign citizen movement** doesn't see it that way and seems to have grown alongside of an anti-vax, anti-immigration movement, adoptees of conspiracy propaganda, and fascist groups. It is commonly described as a loose group of anti-government activists, litigants, tax protesters, financial scammers, and conspiracy theorists mainly based in the United States from the 1960s but we have had some in Australia dating as far back as the Eureka Stockade. Sovereign citizens claim to not be subject to any government statutes unless they consent to them and so are regarded by authorities as 'anti-government extremists' who renounce their citizenship. The 1995 Oklahoma City, bombings



We will remember them crime was

in the USA were perpetrated by self declared sovereign citizens. In Australia the 2022 Wieambilla Qld shootings were also perpetrated by self declared sovereign citizens and the

regarded as Australia's first fundamentalist Christian terrorist attack.³

In the USA where the sovereign citizen movement was originally associated with white supremacy and antisemitism, law enforcement ranked the risk of terrorism from the sovereign citizen movement higher than the risk from any other group, including militias, Islamic extremists, racist skinheads, neo-Nazis, and radical environmentalists. In 2015, the New South Wales Police Force also identified sovereign citizens as a potential terrorist threat.

Given the extremist beliefs, Celebrants need to be aware and cautious.

A person chosen by a couple to be a witness at a NSW wedding, refused to sign the marriage certificates because the documents were created under Commonwealth law. The person identified as a **sovereign citizen** and so another witness had to be quickly chosen because people who refer to themselves as Sovereign Citizens reject the laws of the Commonwealth. They wrongly believe they are not subject to Australian federal, state, or local law because, they claim the laws are invalid and so they would, themselves admit that witnessing a legal procedure and/or legal document would be against their firmly held beliefs. Some even present themselves at voting booths during elections, protesting the legality of elections and even of the government. **Sovereign Citizens don't recognise Commonwealth law and regard it an invalid.**

They will often question the government's authority in regard to creating laws, imposing taxes, and licensing, and will question the entire legal systems. Subscribing to conspiracy theories, they are usually anti-vaccination and during Covid, used the Sovereign Citizen stance to object to travel restrictions, compulsory masking and to the distribution of vaccines, often holding protest marches. They will often quote propaganda from social media clips.

In Western Australia, a group calling themselves the Sovereign Peoples Assembly of Western Australia (SPAWA) have even created their own legal system. They dress alike and have appointed their own 'Sheriff'. According the ABC News, a spokesperson says *their spiritual guide, crown Leith Masters, speaks with meditative conviction, describing their organisation as, "The gathering of people to enact law". "[The government] is not the authority, it's the public servant. We're the authority, the people are the authority, working in law,"*

The ABC pointed out that the group uses pseudolaw i.e. a collection of legal-sounding concepts and arguments that have no basis in actual law, as they target what they see as oppressive institutions. SPAWA members believe their own court has superior authority over traditional courts because it is

.....from previous page

Sovereign Citizens

run by community members, not judges or lawyers. In 2022 SPAWA conducted their own *'jury trial'* and 'convicted' former prime minister Scott Morrison, and every premier in Australia who was involved in the response to COVID-19, with a sentence of 30 years imprisonment.

UNSW law expert, Associate Professor Harry Hobbs, researches the ideology's impact on our laws and legal system. He says the SovCit-style of disruptive courtroom behaviour and fake legal arguments is a practice called 'pseudolaw', and it thrives during times of crisis.

"Most people grab onto pseudolegal arguments because they are trying to maintain control during a family breakup, economic uncertainty, home repossession or something similar, and are just not thinking rationally," says A/Prof. Hobbs.

In courtrooms, pseudo legal practices dispute the law itself. They reject genuine legal advice, speak in outdated or confusing language, and file numerous claims that make no sense. Some act in threatening ways or bring supporters to court. The behaviour slows down trials, increases costs, and puts pressure on a system that's trying to treat everyone fairly.

Disregarded by many as a cult or a collection of disturbed people, groups converged during the COVID era, when perceived government overreach and mandates prompted them to question the legitimacy of the entire legal and governmental framework underpinning society. We once thought that the internet would give us all equal opportunity to education and quality information but it has also given a voice, particularly on social media platforms for people who perceive themselves as being isolated, victimised or disenfranchised, to latch onto and connect with like minded people.

As Sovereign Citizen do not recognise Australian Law, they can never be appointed as an Authorised Celebrant. The question arises as to whether an Authorised Celebrant can even perform a solemnisation of marriage ceremony for a Sovereign Citizen or in an area declared as a sovereign state such as Hutt River, referred to later in this article, and the simple response has to be no because if the person **does not recognise the Marriage Act** (or

any other Australian law), the consent to marry under Australian law is not a real consent. A consideration might be given to phrasing an appropriate question during meetings, e.g. *"do you recognise, understand and accept that you will be married under Australian Law?"* or something similar.

For a Sovereign Citizen to agree to take part in a marriage ceremony it is in effect fraudulent and of course if a Celebrant has any doubt as to the validity of consent. or of the ceremony, it cannot be performed. It would be an offence under the Act to perform a ceremony that may be invalid.

One of the most famous sovereign citizens in Australia involved the **Principality of Hutt River**.



According to [Wikipedia](#) (and I am keeping some of the links here for credit and in case you wish to read more) was often referred to by its former name, the **Hutt River Province**, which was a micronation in Australia, proclaimed on 21st April 1970 when

farmer [Leonard Casley](#) (pictured) declared his farm to be a sovereign state, the *"Hutt River Province"*. He claimed to have seceded from Australia, which occurred during his dispute with the authorities concerning wheat production quotas. A few years later, Casley began styling himself as "Prince



Leonard" and granting family members royal titles, although he did not include the word "principality" in the official name until 2006.

He created its own flag and tax system governed by laws which were enacted by his self-declared government consisting of five

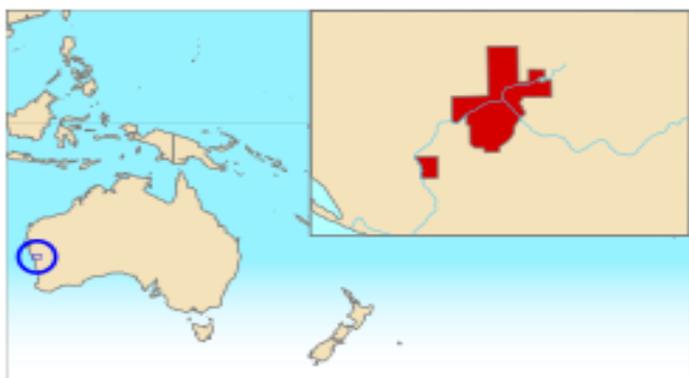


ministers. Leonard sought to evade paying Australian taxes, and was found to owe \$3 million in income tax in 2017.^[17] As part of this tax case, he sought to justify his



position on the basis of the pseudo-legal [Strawman theory](#).^[18] Although Casley created stamps, micronation currency (Hutt River Dollar), visas, and passports for his sovereign state, all authorised

Principality coins were minted by Canada's Lombardo Mint and the New Queensland Mint. Casley claimed that his passports were accepted by foreign nations but there is no evidence of that. The federal Government of Australia never officially recognised Hutt River as an official and independent nation, and later, it became a well-known tourist attraction. In 2017, Casley's claim to rulership was



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Sovereign Citizens

taken over by his son Graeme,^{[21][31][4]} who dropped the claim to sovereignty on 3 August 2020. As an adherent of [hermeticism](#), Casley privately published a number of research papers and books on the subject. Wikipedia suggests that Casley is the subject of a permanent exhibit at the [National Museum of Australia](#) in Canberra.^{[27][28]} however that is not evident on the Museum webpage.. Prince Leonard was perhaps the inspiration of others in Australia declaring themselves to be sovereign citizens.

Whilst many may not have heard of Sovereign Citizens until the recent shootings, they may have seen videos on Social Media of Sovereign Citizen refusing to show identification to Police when stopped on state or federal roads and then insisting that they are not driving but simply 'travelling'. When summonsed to court, the Sovereign Citizen will usually self-represent.

According to the NSW Justices Association magistrates, the number of judicial complaints has increased between 20 to 30 per cent, with many of those filed by sovereign citizens contesting low-grade legal matters such as speeding or parking fines, driving without a licence, driving unregistered vehicles, trespassing, illicit drug use or intimidating & threatening officials, and in preparing their defence, the Sovereign Citizen may approach a Justice of the Peace or a Marriage Celebrant to witness an affidavit with as many as 300 annexures. Those low level offences are of course commonly subject to state law and so unless the hearing is in the ACT, the Affidavit would not normally be accepted by the court if witnessed by a Marriage Celebrant.

One celebrant reported having dealt with 5 sovereign citizen couples in just over 18 months, some of whom had been quite aggressive in their demands. The country town has a single street light and is at least 70km from the next populated area and proportionally has a high drug use.

One sovereign citizen couple contacted a Celebrant asserting that their farm was their 'nation' and they even created their own ID's which of course could not be accepted and so the Celebrant had to decline the ceremony because the couple refused to provide valid identity documents. The Celebrant also received a note similar to the following though a few details have been changed for privacy:

My birth rite and personal identification.

I am born of this Earth

I do not belong to any corporation including the corrupt Australian government.

I am a citizen of the Green Bush Nation.

My birth rite is Earth

My birth date is the date of my gaining awareness on 15th

February 1968

My birth name is Flowing Stream.

I choose to renounce my Australian Government corporation name.

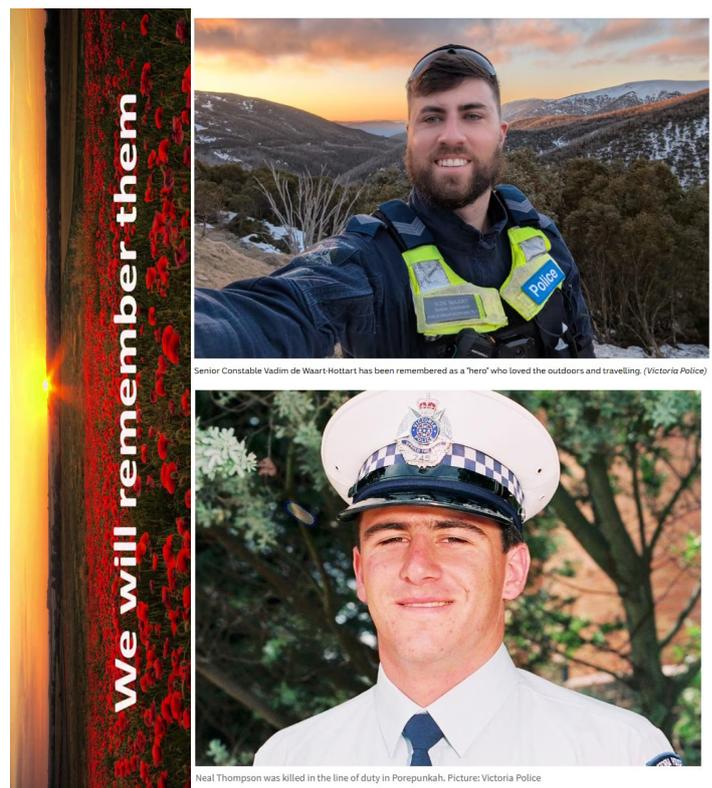
I should not need corporation documents to marry

I choose how I live and how I marry.

The couple even asked the Celebrant to 'fudge' the records which of course was also refused. The Celebrant had to explain to the couple that if as Sovereign Citizens they wished to marry under a law they recognise, it would have to be under their own nation's law but that a Celebrant Authorised under the Marriage Act is only authorised to solemnise marriages under Australian law within Australian borders. A commitment ceremony was not offered as the couple insisted they wished to 'marry'.

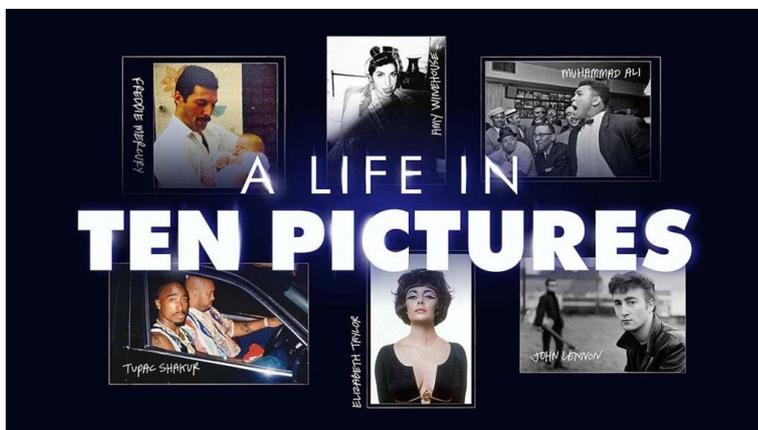
So in short, only legitimate documents from recognised nations can be accepted as evidence of the date & place of birth, and of identity, and if the party does not recognise Australian law, they cannot be married or be a witness under the Marriage Act of Australia.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_citizen_movement
- [Principality of Hutt River - Wikipedia](#)
- [Prince Leonard Bust \(14389745770\) - Category:Leonard George Casley - Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Category:Leonard George Casley - Wikimedia Commons](#)
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-08-18/sovereign-citizen-movement-law-court-four-corners/105655100>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_f5GFvspdc
- <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/UNSWLawJl/2024/11.html>
- <https://www.scu.edu.au/news/2024/pseudo-law-and-the-case-of-the-sovereign-citizen/>
- <https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/www.sog.unc.edu/files/Sov%20citizens%20quick%20guide%20Nov%2013.pdf>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-10/slain-officer-vadim-de-waart-parents-visit-porepunkah/105757634>



Senior Constable Vadim de Waart Hottart has been remembered as a 'hero' who loved the outdoors and travelling. (Victoria Police)

Neal Thompson was killed in the line of duty in Porepunkah. Picture: Victoria Police



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.



You'll find this gem on SBS. Written by Donald Martin and Harrison Powell, it was inspired by the true story of producer Harrison Powell's own grandmother's second chance at love after moving into a retirement community as a widow.

It's a funny sensitive story about 4 mature age women negotiating the trials and tribulations of the many changes of longevity that if we're lucky enough to get there we may all experience. Rom-com movies are mostly aimed at younger audiences so it's great to see a quality mature age romance comedy.

The story line is that Helen, an independent widow, moves into the Pine Grove Senior Community and discovers that, just like in high school, it is full of cliques and flirtatious suitors. What she initially avoids leads her to exactly what she has been missing; new friendships and a new chance for love.

It is a touching story and lightly entertaining story and so one you might watch when resting after a hectic ceremony to put you in the mood for the next.

For Celebrants, the last 10 minutes or so, and the credits, are the most important when you might consider making some notes and perhaps adjusting your target marketing because not only do we encounter a wonderful ceremony, but we see photos of numerous couples of senior years, who have found love.

[Queen Bees \(2021\) - User reviews - IMDb](#)

If your house was on fire, when asked what two items you would take with you when escaping, people, before storing photos on-line, people would say a "photos". As Celebrants, we are see many photos that exemplify a life, whether at a major birthday, a wedding, anniversary or funeral and so you might ask what 10 photos might exemplify a life. This series looks at that very subject.

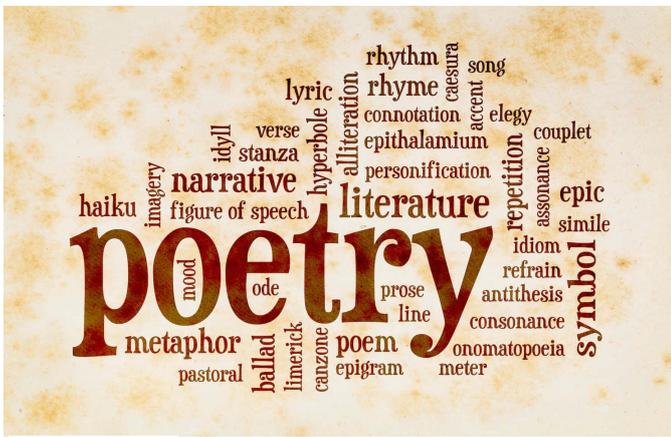
The program promoters tell us that "A Life In Ten Pictures" embarks on a unique and profound journey into the lives of iconic figures who have left an indelible mark on the world. Each episode of this series distils a lifetime of achievements, challenges, and defining moments into just ten carefully chosen photographs, offerings a rich and intimate glimpse into the extraordinary lives of some remarkable figures.

As the series unfolds, viewers are treated to interviews with historians, colleagues, friends, and family members who provide insights and perspectives on the lives and personalities of these luminaries. These narratives not only shed light on the individuals themselves but also the eras they lived in and the profound impact they had on society.

"A Life In Ten Pictures" is more than just a documentary series; it's an exploration of the human spirit, the power of visual storytelling, and the capacity of a single image to encapsulate a lifetime of experiences. It encourages viewers to reflect on the complexity of the human experience and the ways in which people can shape the world through their actions and ideas.

Discovering the choices made here to exemplify a life, we might gain insight into our own creation of photo collages for events or how they might be presented.





Barbara Bell tells us about her poem: TIME OF GRIEVING

There is a message behind this poem that is so important. Be kind and respectful of your partner to the best of your ability. You don't know what a treasure (nor

appreciate) what you have until they are no longer with you and you are struggling to accept their loss. Memories are good to have and keep them in your mind forever, but memories alone do not heal. It does take time, and no two people grieve in the same way as the other. It may take weeks, months, years and it takes as long as it takes. So do not forget to be kind to yourself. To the friends of the grieving one. Do not give advice or cliches, just listen and encourage the person/ to talk about their departed one. That is the best way to support your relative or friend.

She Is A Gift From Him

by Pravin Gupta

However nice the weather may be,
And the Sun be bright and warm,
The white cotton clouds floating on blue,
But there is nothing better than a lover's arm.

Be ever thankful to the one with you,
For the love she gave without a thought,
For those smiles she brought to your lips,
When you were in mourn by the battles fought.

With her arms around your neck,
And her pretty head on your chest,
When the road of life was weary to walk,
Was there a better place than her lap to rest.

When the future looked grim and clouds were black,
When the sea seemed angry and the waves high,
Her soothing presence with her assuring smile,
Gave you the courage for once again to try.

May be the One above who sent you down,
In your fate with your troubles wrote,
To face them and win your journey here,
You shall thank Me for her that you have got

TIME OF GRIEVING

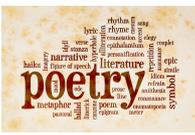
author Barbara Bell .13th September 2025

My days seem to be so lonely and forlorn
Ever since my love has gone.
My life is clogged with lament
Without love and happiness.
How fleeting is the joy and warm content
That surrounds a special bonding.
The marriage vows speak with promise
That the love between the two souls
Will be forever and will never end.
How uncertain this promise is
And love blinds us to its unsought end
For any great love has a shadow unknown
That does sometimes end unbeknown
Grief forgets that timeless premise
And often results in overwhelming sorrow
That envelops the ones left behind
With emotions so crushing and tense
Nothing seems to be of consequence.
Life routines for others you know
Goes on with seemingly unimportant things,
To-ing and fro-ing and forgets.
No human being wants to feel a future so intense
Which can incapacitate those left behind
And hence, they try to mentally forget, for a while,
The grieving, by trying to find
A new existence which seems at times
Incapable of being found.
And the aloneness of daily life becomes a challenge
To obtain a happy reality and a life of balance.
It is said that life is a circle from the beginning to end
And that time heals all.
But time is relentless and keeps on going
And is not a friend.
Time is oblivious to those who have forgotten
How to stand tall.
Whose grieving process still goes on
And does not end.
Time already has forgotten those
Who are left behind
Struggling a new life to find.
So be kind to yourself,
Take your time to grieve.
Then, and only then you will survive
To reclaim a happy mind.

ABOUT THE POETS

Barbara Bell is a retired Celebrant & Celebrant trainer who has contributed a number of articles over time. You will find wonderful articles from her in past editions.

Pravin Gupta, pictured on the front page, is a philanthropist, lawyer, celebrated as the oldest graduate of law in NSW, retired Civil Engineer, groom, widower, an adventurer, a romantic, and a poet who likes to visit the south coast.



The Golden Years (With a Wink)

author Barbara Bell, Sept 2025

When do they occur?
 I think mine are still in the wind and coming—
 because right now, my years feel more like rusty tin
 With a squeak in every joint and an unwelcome double chin
 Life comes in stages, or so they say:
 First, you're a fearless kid, having fun and making hay
 Then you grow up, pay bills,
 and sometimes not,—
 I don't remember being told that youth was short.
 I ask myself "Hang on was I ever young?"
 I in my previous years didn't get puffed playing sport.
 I must have been young although I don't remember.
 Because my 90th birthday is this coming December
 Blink twice and my youth is... where?
 Where'd it go? I forgot.
 You realize the golden years aren't ahead—they're sneaky,
 They whizzed past while you were losing your memory
 weekly.

Golden Years.
 What are they?
 Who decided they were gold?
 I suspect they're not even silver, truth be told .
 Maybe they meant "golden" sardonically—
 Or maybe it's just a clever phrase
 to make aging sound like a prize, not a phase.
 We wait for the Almighty's call,
 while binge-watching shows and avoiding a fall.
 We've worked for decades, earned our stripes,
 Now we nap like pros and complain with gripes.
 Still, we're grateful for the time we've got,
 Even if our knees say help and our back is shot."
 Perhaps those lovely words are meant to gild
 The relentless truth: getting old is not so hot.

A Love Poem

(by Lou Szymkow 14/2/2000 regarding the warmth & splendour of love over time)

Though the years have gone by, it must seem but
 a second
 since you had that first kiss and your love began
 to beckon,
 His smile attracted you,
 Her beauty inspired you,
 Just a glance warmed your heart,
 and the mere thought of each other
 kept you swooning even when apart,
 You still yearn for a sweet caress,
 a gentle kiss of finesse
 those tender lips to thine,
 your souls forever entwined
 heart and soul and mind,
 and when the world is full of plight
 there is still a gentle kiss, goodnight,
 and all those worries turn to solutions
 and you know,
 all will be all right.

I AM ME

By Lou Szymkow, 2019, (written for a friend who struggled to be heard)

I am me,
 Not a disability
 I am me,
 I am not a disease, Call me by my name if you please
 I am me,
 I am not a statistic, not an autistic
 I am me,
 I am not a client number, over which you can
 blunder
 I am me,
 I am human, not a machine you can demean,
 I am me,
 Not to be ignored or unseen,
 I am me,
 Not to be spoken over or left to be bored
 I am me,
 I have feelings and I have essence
 I am me,
 I am in the room, don't ignore my presence
 I am me,
 I am heart and I am soul,
 I am me,
 And am as precious as gold,
 I AM ME!
 I AM.



COORDINATOR COMMENTS



I just love a good review, don't you?

Reviews certainly let other know about your work and potential clients almost always have a look at reviews even after they have made a choice if only to reaffirm that choice. It is not just an ego stroke but an integral part of promoting your business. A good review tells others

about how you perform and gives the Celebrant reassurance.

The content of reviews and feedback can at times be surprising. One couple excitedly promised the best review ever but weeks later it was a very subdued and understated review. Another complained about all sorts of irrelevancies during the preparation process but then gave an extraordinarily good review citing patience and guidance as two of the top qualities.

Occasionally couples offer reviews even before the process is complete which is wonderful of course but we haven't discussed what to do if there is a poor review.

Bad reviews, if they occur, take three forms:

- 1) Expectations unfulfilled
- 2) Trolls/fake
- 3) Scam

Dealing with the first can be a delicate process, and so you should always send the client instructions on how to lodge a formal complaint and, presuming that you are at fault, perhaps send a response such as *"I always strive to exceed expectations but in your instance I'm sorry they were not met"* and then explain what reparations you are prepared to make which may include a refund noting that it may be better for business to take a small loss than to exacerbate the situation with argument. Get it closed and move on.

The second may be harder to deal with but may require decisive action. If it is a harmful fake review, report it and consider legal action, because it is illegal to post a fake reviews. Note that Google is rarely of any assistance because although they claim to have strict rules about fake reviews as required by law, they have bewilderingly been known to side with the troll even after some businesses have prosecuted Google. There are then two options. The most successful is to have your page flooded with good reviews so that the one bad review quickly disappears. The average rating may drop ever so slightly but it has been claimed by 'experts' that a perfect score can in itself be problematic because persons with unrealistic expectations will presume all their demands can be met.

The second is to respond with:

"Thank you for taking the time to place a review but you are not a client and have never attended any of my ceremonies and so it would appear that your review is sadly a work of vexatious fiction and has been reported as such. Should you ever choose to use my services, you are likely to find that client expectations are always exceeded. Hope your day gets better."

That acknowledges the complaint but identifies it as being from a troll but shows dignity on your part.

The third is rare but has been known to occur. In ten years I have only heard of one or two instances. A 'bridezilla' complained to the Celebrant with a list of fictitious grievances and demanding a refund. The astonished Celebrant, aware that the couple had expressed pure joy following the ceremony, contacted other vendors and discovered that the same person had made similar complaints to each and every vendor and that each had responded differently. One vendor threatened immediate legal action and was paid the invoiced amount with the bridezilla saying *"it was worth a try"*, another offered a small partial refund but made it known that all the vendors were now aware of the scam, and one reported it to Police as fraud. One vendor also took it to the media and the bridezilla was then exposed publicly on a major TV network and the show then received numerous new complaints about the same person from other dealings which were passed on to Police and the 'bridezilla' did have to face a court.

The simplest path forward though is usually the best.

Make certain that your terms and conditions are on your invoice, contract and/or published on your webpage. If a problem arises, it is then easy to just refer to your terms and conditions and quickly move on.

As Celebrants we are in the business of evoking wonderful emotion, not profiteering and so our profits are often very limited.

As you may know, I am not in the habit of offering discounts. If you offer a \$10 discount, you have lost that \$10 but you still do the work. You then have to work twice as hard to not only recover the first loss of \$10 but work even more to get back to where you should have been without the discount. That means your discount of \$10 is actually a loss of \$30. On the rare occasion that I have offered a discount because of exceptional circumstances, I've been bitten. I discounted for a couple in obvious need but instead of pocketing the savings and putting it to an essential such as food or rent, they completely wasted the savings with absurd excess. e.g. hired 100 chairs when less than 20 were needed, and bought not one but two \$450 cakes. They were actually worse off because of my discount. Oh, and always get paid before the ceremony to avoid complications.

So golden rules, report fake reviews, charge your worth, don't discount, and always get paid upfront.

