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Christmas 2025  
AMC  
South Coast  
Celebrants  
gathered for  
lunch, laughs  
and the pleasure  
of each other's  
company.



To achieve success, we will continue to grow and do what we can to help each other grow.  
*We are Celebrants Cheering for Each Other*



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It was on **14<sup>th</sup> March 1978** that the Hague Convention on **Celebration and Recognition of the Validity of Marriages** implemented, the provision of Article 23 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which places the right of marriage of couples of marriageable age in the foreground, and bases marriage on the free and full consent of the intending spouses facilitating the celebration of marriages and ensuring the recognition of the validity of marriages across national borders.

◊ Part I: of the Convention deals with celebration of marriage;

◊ Part II: with the recognition of foreign marriages.

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The general rule is that, if a marriage is legally recognised in the country where the ceremony takes place, then it will be recognised in other countries. The following is a simple guide:

◊ was it valid under the local law at the time it was entered into; and

◊ the marriage would have been recognised under local law if it had taken place in that country  
So commonly there is little issue with marriage recognition but some problems do occasionally arise.

In Australia, the amendment to the Marriage Act to legalise same-sex marriage was the [Marriage Amendment \(Definition and Religious Freedoms\) Bill 2017](#) which was given royal assent by the governor-general, Sir Peter Cosgrove, on 8 December 2017.<sup>[33]</sup> however same-sex marriage is not universally recognised as 62 nations continue to criminalise homosexuality (and therefore same-sex marriage), with nearly half being in Africa. South Africa exists as the only African country to legalise same-sex marriage, having done so in 2006. The list of countries that have legalised same-sex marriage and so will afford recognition, of all Australian marriages, include: Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland,

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Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Uruguay.

Whilst Germany and France both have marriage equality and recognise all marriages solemnised in Australia, there are some complications that may arise for their citizens who choose to marry here, and so let's look specifically at **Australian Marriage Recognition in France & Germany?**

Celebrants are reminded to inform couples that it is not the role of a Celebrant to offer any migration or legal advice in regard to property and inheritance.

A German or French national wishing to marry in Australia may benefit from independent legal advice, or at the very least, seek advice from their respective embassies, before entering into marriage in Australia if they plan to return to their country of origin, or retain rights to ancestral property.



**French nationals who wish to marry in Australia**, but want their marriage to be recognized in

France, have to follow a few key steps:

- **Pre-Marriage Procedures:** Before your wedding, they must apply for a certificate of capacity to marry at the French Embassy or Consulate where they will need to provide documents such as proof of French nationality, valid ID, domicile proof, and birth certificates.
- **Marriage Recognition:** To have the marriage officially recognised in France, the union must be transcribed into the French civil registration records through the embassy or consulate where the marriage occurred.
- **Post-Transcription Benefits:** Once transcribed, the party will receive a French family record book (livret de famille) and have their birth certificate updated to reflect the marriage. These documents provide a seamless way to prove your marital status in France.

For those marrying in France, the banns are displayed at the local town hall (mairie) and the civil ceremony is conducted at that same town hall (mairie) officiated by

the mayor or an authorised representative to make it legally binding, ensuring the union is recognised under French law. Typically, couples marrying in France will follow the legal Civil Ceremony with a far more flexible symbolic ceremony, led by a professional celebrant, a close friend, or a family member.

For foreigners wishing to marry in France, at least one partner must have a connection to the commune, typically through residence, property ownership, or family ties. Many municipalities require a minimum residency of 30 days before submitting the marriage application.

Foreigners must provide:

- valid passports,
- birth certificate translated into French,
- proof of residence,
- a certificate of celibacy, and,
- if applicable, proof of the termination of a previous marriages.

Under French law, a civil marriage (mariage civil) is the only legally valid form of marriage. They do not have a Civil Celebrancy program as we do in Australia.

Religious or symbolic ceremonies are optional and have no legal standing and a prior civil ceremony at the local mairie must first be conducted.

French marriage law prohibits polygamy, and any prior marriage must be fully dissolved before a new marriage can take place.

Marriage establishes legal rights and obligations between spouses, including property, inheritance, and family responsibilities and they have marriage equality.

The minimum legal age to marry in France is 18 years for both men and women.

Individuals aged 16 or 17 may marry but only with parental consent as well as judicial authorisation. Both parties must consent freely and of course, must be present at the ceremony.

Marriages between immediate family members, as in Australia, are strictly prohibited.

French law provides different "*marital property regimes*" (*régimes matrimoniaux*) defining how assets and debts are managed during marriage and dissolution. These regimes are governed by Articles 1400 et seq. of the French Civil Code. If a couple marries without a specific choice, the default regime is the "*communauté réduite aux acquêts*" (*community of acquests*).

The choice of regime significantly impacts financial rights and responsibilities throughout the marriage and in the event of divorce or death.

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- “communauté réduite aux acquêts,” assets acquired by either spouse during marriage are common property. Assets owned before marriage or received through inheritance or gift remain separate property. “communauté universelle” pools all assets, whether acquired before or during the marriage, into common property.
- “séparation de biens” (separation of property) and “communauté universelle” (universal community). In “séparation de biens,” each spouse retains full ownership and management of their individual assets and debts. Couples can choose a specific regime by entering into a marriage contract (contrat de mariage) before marriage, prepared by a notary.
- It is possible to change the marital property regime later, though this requires a notarial act and specific conditions.

Importantly if all procedures are not correctly undertaken, ensuring the recognition of the marriage and any name changes, inheritance of property in France may be detrimentally impacted by the Australian marriage leading to significant legal issues, should there be an inheritance, a death or a dissolution of marriage and so if procedures are not followed, there could be an impact, not just upon the couple, but on their descendants.

#### Similar complications can arise in Germany.



In Germany, marriage eligibility is basically similar to Australia in that couples can only marry when over 18, can be of any sex, and cannot be

between immediate family members, but according to **Marry Abroad Simply**, German couples who marry in Australia, can not only have their Australian marriage recognised, in Germany, but they can have their marriage registered in Germany.

For many German citizens and residents, getting married in Australia offers a simpler, faster, and far less bureaucratic alternative to marrying in the well-regulated and highly structured German marriage registration system, which comes with a long list of required documents and potentially lengthy delays – particularly for international or mixed-nationality couples.

Marriage in Australia is recognised in Germany and couples do not need to register their marriage for it to be legally valid, although they can, as mentioned, register the Australian in the German marriage register (Eheregister) if they wish to obtain an optional German marriage certificate.

As long as the Australian marriage certificate is issued correctly a translation is generally not required.

To register an Australian marriage in Germany, the list

of required documents is extensive and varies depending on your nationality, place of birth, marital history, and residency status. You may be asked for:

- Birth certificates (apostilled or legalised if from abroad)
- Certified divorce decrees (with court confirmation of legal effect)
- Translations by court-sworn translators
- Citizenship or naturalisation certificates
- Proof of German residency
- Parental documentation in some cases

**Marry Abroad Simply** claim it to be It's a complex process – and for many couples, it's easier to get married abroad first and then handle German registration later, if needed.

Unless spouses determine otherwise by way of a marriage contract, they will live in what German law labels a matrimonial property regime of “community of accrued gain.” If the spouses generate an additional gain during their marriage, this gain shall be distributed between the spouses in the event of divorce.

The gain is the amount by which the so-called “final assets” exceed the “original assets.” If the gain of one spouse exceeds the gain of the other spouse, half of the surplus may be claimed by the other spouse as a means of equalization.

Non-marital assets represent those assets brought into the marriage by one spouse after deducting his or her liabilities. If one spouse inherits during the marriage, these assets are to be added to the non-marital assets. In contrast, what German law labels as final assets represents those assets that the spouse can show after deduction of his or her liabilities after the marriage.

In addition to community of accrued gains, the spouses may also choose the matrimonial property regime of separation of property or community of property. However, these must be set out in a marriage contract. Separation of property also involves the separation of assets, but divorce does not compensate any gains. Joint property, on the other hand, provides for all assets of the spouses to become one single and jointly held asset.

Thus, in Germany, the constitution and organisation of marriage can be quite diverse and complicated.

\* [Marriage in France - Wikipedia](#)

\* [How to Get Married in France as a Foreigner \(2025 Update\)](#)

\* [Married to a French Citizen: What Are My Rights? - LegalClarity](#)

\* <https://www.jacksonlawinternational.com/matrimonial-law/>

\* <https://marryabroadsimply.com/wedding-blog/getting-married-abroad-as-a-german-citizen>

\* <https://nicholeslaw.com.au/same-sex-marriage-equality-a-global-review/>



Phil Timbrell, the Happy Day Celebrant, delivers ceremonies in the Blue Mountains wearing his Akubra hat. He is the AMC Nepean and Blue Mountains Regional Coordinator, a regular & valued contributor to this newsletter, and is qualified in both marketing & engineering.



## Marketing Tip

By Phil Timbrell

**How to make yourself known in the market when starting out – for free.**

One of the biggest difficulties new celebrants strike is how to make yourself known.

There are 2 key steps in winning your first bookings.

- ⇒ Be found
- ⇒ Capture the attention of the couple

**YOU WILL BE FOUND**

**Being found** can be a very expensive exercise if you advertise in paid places such as

EW, Wedlockers and so on. There are many ways to gain exposure for free. Facebook can be your biggest friend.

There are many local Facebook groups which allow advertising on maybe 1 day of the month or every Monday. You can also change your name on Facebook now and again so adding the word “Celebrant” to your name will appear every time you post. With the word “celebrant” attached to your name you can now comment on posts without actually advertising but you are still putting your identity out there.

**The most effective advertising is advertising that has a common message and is repeated.**

Thus running an ad every week or month on your local FB group, and any other local FB groups that will allow you to join can be gold.

I am a member of around 30 FB groups dedicated to weddings, brides and wedding celebrants. Once again these are free. Many comments relate to a couple looking for recommendations for a celebrant, DJ or some other profession. If you are in there commenting there is a higher chance someone will look you up than if you are not.

Finally I will give a warning. I was once mentoring a new celebrant from one of Sydney’s more affluent suburbs. On checking her FB posts I found regular political comments which did not favour one side of politics. Clearly this will not win any business from

50% of the population and may even turn off potential clients with similar political views - it is very risky – keep your political opinions off your FB post.

**Capture the attention of the couple** relates to the



marketing term of **attending**. People planning to marry will subconsciously pay attention to wedding related matters. You may have experienced the same

thing maybe when planning to buy a new car. Suddenly you find yourself paying attention to car ads whereas you did not in the past. You start noticing the car of choice or cars of your chosen colour as you drive and walk around more than you did in the past.

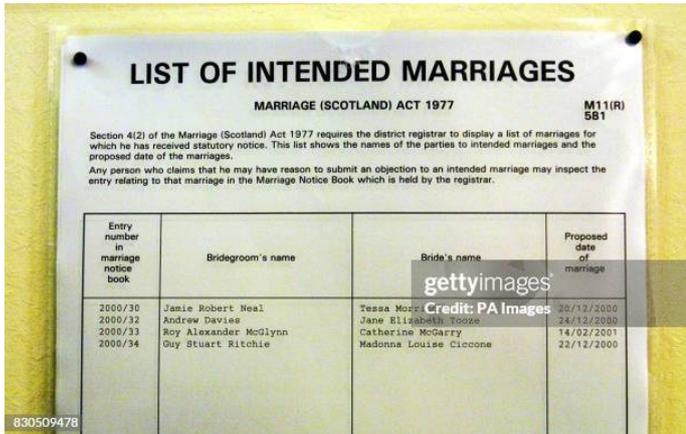
So what will make couples planning to marry pay attention to your post as opposed to someone else’s post. The simple answer is **pictures**. People will react emotionally to a great photo and linger on the photo. The words then follow. Long sentences are rarely read as they are time consuming whereas a picture can give a complete message quickly and efficiently followed by a well chosen short sentence with a hyperlink to an Instagram page or website. A photo of you posing might work but a candid photo of you doing something that might evoke an emotional response will achieve the attention you are seeking.

The following photo was created by a videographer friend – Lucas Howard.

To me this photo immediately evokes an emotional response so it has achieved its goal. A posed photo rarely achieves an emotional response I hope these tips assist you in getting your business off the ground.



# THE BANNS OF MARRIAGE & THE NOTICE OF INTENDED MARRIAGE



another village for immediate marriage. Records suggest that the original Catholic Canon law was intended to prevent clandestine marriages, as decreed in Canon 51 of the Lateran IV Council in 1215; Clandestinity is a diriment impediment (*an obstacle to a marriage or a condition that invalidates a marriage*). A marriage performed without the presence of three witnesses, one of whom must be a priest or a deacon, invalidated the marriage. Until then, the public announcement in church of marriages to be contracted was only made in some areas.<sup>[2]</sup> In England, on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1563, the Council of Trent made the provisions more precise:

*before the celebration of any marriage, the names of the contracting parties should be announced publicly in the church during Mass, by the parish priests of both parties on three consecutive Holy Days.*<sup>[3]</sup>

In some places, the words once spoken by the priest were:

*"I publish the banns of marriage between (Name of party) of the Parish of..... and (Name of other party) of this Parish. If any of you know cause or just impediment why these persons should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, ye are to declare it. This is for the (first, second, third) time of asking."*

Marriage licenses were introduced in the 14th century to allow the usual notice period under banns to be waived, on payment of a fee and accompanied by a sworn declaration that there was no canonical

To Australian Civil Celebrants, the 'banns or marriage' are irrelevant because of the Marriage Act but we should have an understanding as questions will arise from couples of a religious or international background, particularly French.

The **banns of marriage**, commonly known simply as the "banns" or "bans" (from a Middle English word meaning "proclamation", rooted in Frankish and thence in Old French),<sup>[1]</sup> are the public announcement in a Christian parish church, or in the town council, of an impending marriage between two specified persons. It is commonly associated with the Catholic Church, the Church of Sweden (Lutheran), the Church of England (Anglican), and with other Christian denominations whose traditions are similar with most stemming from the Catholic church.

The purpose of banns is to enable anyone to raise any canonical or civil legal impediments to the marriage, so as to prevent invalid marriages. Impediments vary between legal jurisdictions, but would normally include:

- a pre-existing marriage that has been neither dissolved nor annulled,
- a vow of celibacy,
- lack of consent, or
- the couple being related within a prohibited degree of kinship.

The banns, in removing a lack of consent, removed the likelihood of a forced marriage in that an unwilling bride could no longer be dragged to

### Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell is regarded as one of the most influential politicians in history.

#### Early Life

Cromwell was born in 1599 in Huntingdon. He went to school there then started college in Cambridge. He left early after his father died, returning to Huntingdon to help support his mother and siblings. Cromwell married in 1620. His wife Elizabeth had many connections to influential families.

#### Rise in Politics

Cromwell became a Member of Parliament in 1628. Shortly afterwards, King Charles I dissolved Parliament until 1640. During this period, Cromwell gained contacts and favour in the House of Lords for his Puritan views. Puritans were protestants who believed the Church of England had too many Roman Catholic influences and needed to change.

#### Civil War

In 1642, supporters of parliament and King Charles I went to war for the right to rule the country. Supporters of King Charles were called the Royalists or Cavaliers. Supporters of Parliament were known as the Parliamentarians or Roundheads. Cromwell proved to be skilled in battle strategy and command. He rose through the ranks and led several key battles to victory.

The Parliamentarians won the civil war and executed Charles I in 1649. Cromwell spent several years suppressing resistance in Ireland and Scotland.

#### Rule

Cromwell could not agree with Parliament on how to rule the country so he disbanded them in 1653. He became Lord Protector of England and the country became Puritan. He also built an enormous navy and removed powers relating to the monarchs.

Cromwell died in 1658. He had a state funeral, just like a king, and his son succeeded him in ruling England.

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impediment to the marriage.

In 1656 (*during the Commonwealth or Protectorate period in England*), the parish register of St Mary le Crypt in Gloucester records banns of marriage as being "published by the Bellman" (the Town Crier).



Before 1754, when the Clandestine Marriages Act

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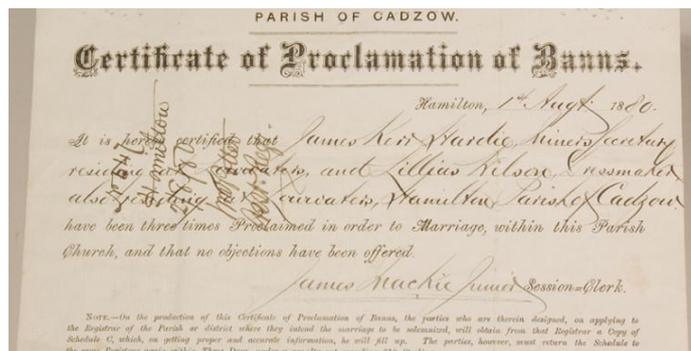


1753 came into force in England, eloping couples could be married clandestinely by an ordained clergyman. Under this law, a marriage was only legally valid if the banns had been called or a marriage licence had been obtained, codifying earlier practice within the Church of England. By this law, the banns were required to be read aloud on three Sundays before the wedding ceremony, in the home parish churches of both parties. Omission rendered the marriage void, unless the bishop's licence (a *common licence*) or the special licence of the Archbishop of Canterbury had been obtained. Elopers had to instead, leave England and Wales in order to contract a marriage while avoiding these formalities. Scotland, in particular Gretna Green, Scotland, which is near the English border, was the customary destination, but became less popular after 1856 when Scottish law was amended to require 21 days' residence. The Isle of Man was briefly popular also, but in 1757 Tynwald, the island's legislature, passed a similar Act, with the additional sanction of pillorying and ear-cropping for clergymen from overseas who married couples without banns.<sup>[5]</sup>

This the Clandestine Marriages Act 1753 requirement had the effect of requiring Roman Catholics and other non-conformists to be married in the Church of England, and the requirement was not lifted by legislation until the Marriage Act 1836.

The wording of banns according to the rites of the Church of England is as follows:

- I publish the banns of marriage between (NAME) of ... and (NAME) of .(PARISH)..
- This is the first / second / third time of asking. If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined in Holy Matrimony, ye are to declare it. (Book of Common Prayer 1662) *or*
- This is the first / second / third time of asking. If any of you know any reason in law why they may not marry each other you are to declare it. (Common



Worship 2000)

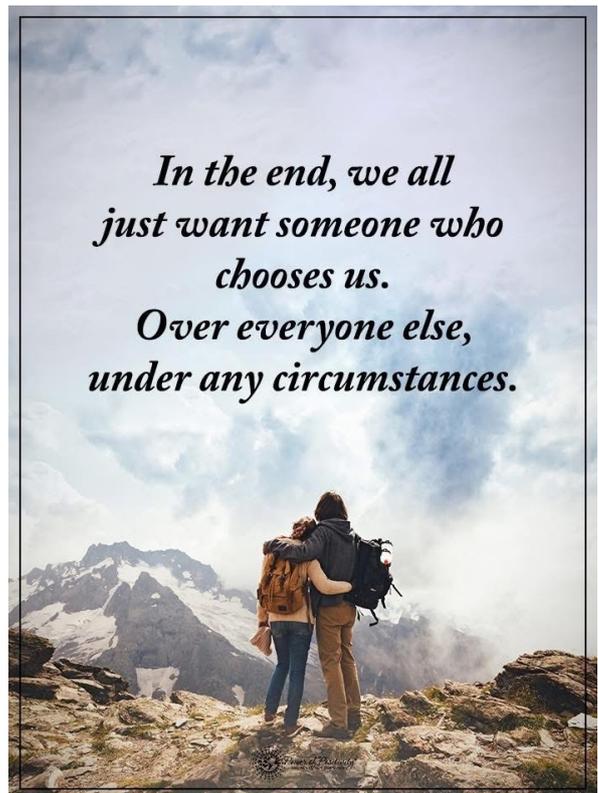
In France, civil law requires the publication of banns of marriage in the towns where intended spouses are living. It should be displayed in the town hall ten days before the marriage.

In Germany, civil law required the publication of banns of marriage until 1998. The process was called "*das Aufgebot bestellen*". Presently, couples must still register for civil marriage beforehand, which has the same effect of ruling out immediate marriage but a public proclamation or posting isn't necessary anymore.

Traditionally, banns were read from the pulpit and were usually published in the parish weekly bulletin. Before 1983, canon law required banns to be announced, or "asked", in the home parishes of both parties to the marriage, on three Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation before the marriage. In 1983, the Catholic Church removed the requirement for banns and left it to individual or national bishops' conferences to decide whether to continue the practice, but in most Catholic countries, the banns are still published.

In Australia, when the Marriage Act 1961, was introduced, the banns was not required but 7 days notice of marriage was, however on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1975, bowing to church pressure in a proclaimed effort to stem the rising divorce rate, the 24<sup>th</sup> Attorney General, Bob Ellicott QC lengthened the notice period to a month, where it remains to this day

[Clandestinity \(Catholic canon law\) - Wikipedia](#)  
[Banns of marriage - Wikipedia](#)



*In the end, we all  
 just want someone who  
 chooses us.  
 Over everyone else,  
 under any circumstances.*



# TRADITIONS & RITUALS

Rituals, whether traditional, modified, created, or a combination of all, held within a wedding ceremony separate the ceremony from others, making it unique to the specific event. The ritual may be undertaken at the start, during or after the ceremony.

Each comprises of an action or combination of actions or words that identifies separate persons, cultures or traditions but which, through a common action, ritualistically demonstrates creates a sense of unity.

Easily incorporated into a wedding ceremony, the choice of ritual and can honour the couple's heritage or culture but can be especially inclusive, hence the term 'unity', when the marriage is a joining or blending of two pre-existing families. In performing or designing rituals, Celebrants should be very cautious to not appropriate rituals and traditions of a sensitive nature that may cause offence to traditionalists and participants in specific cultures or religious faiths.

- 1) The **Chocolate Milk Unity** ceremony is for lovers of chocolate. One person pours the milk while another pours the chocolate syrup. They can stir to mix themselves, or others can stir to mix the liquids completely.



As this takes place, the Celebrant speaks of the richness and sweetness of life and of life-giving milk which when combined, can never be separated. Throughout history, milk has been associated with nurturing, beauty, compassion, innocence, youth, and the nurturing of a beloved while Chocolate is a universal symbol of love, desire, passion, and emotional intimacy but when the ingredients are combined, they transform into something more delicious than they could ever be on their own.

- 2) The **Unity Candle** is very common as it stems from Christianity, where the candle is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Baptisms, weddings and funerals, but is easily and commonly adapted to Civil



Ceremonies, where the flame can be described as the spirit of a deceased family member or simply to represent family spirit. Two or more separate candles or tapers representing individuals or families are used in combination to light a separate, larger candle, symbolising the joining of two lives or families into one.

- 3) The **Sand Ceremony** is another very popular ritual, once again perfect when there are children. Kits are available or can be created but involves persons pouring different coloured sands into a single



vessel, to represent the blending of lives and families. The sand can be shaken so that a new blend is created, with it being impossible to separate, or left to show the various layers that can never be returned to separation without destruction. The vessel is then sealed in perpetuity.

- 4) **Handfasting** originates from Norse, Celtic, Hindu, Buddhism and seafaring traditions. The hands of the couple are tied together with a cord or ribbon to symbolise their binding union. The cord or ribbon may be coloured or patterned



according to a specific culture or heritage, with each colour having a history or meaning. A Celtic or seafarers knot might be used and the cord or ribbon can be framed as a keepsake.

- 5) A **Quaich Ceremony** is a Scottish ritual where the couple sip from a two-handled cup or "Quaich" symbolising trust, faith and a shared future.



- 6) **Drinking from the Bragr Cup**, is similar to the Quaich Ceremony, where a mead-filled cup is shared by the couple as words of unity are spoken or exchanged.



- 7) **La Coupe de Mariage** is a French tradition of the couple drinking from a two-handled cup, which, just as the Quaich, symbolises their union and shared life. Once again, words of unity are spoken or exchanged about sharing life's joys and burdens.



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8) **Blending of Wine or Mead** is another

Pagan ritual, where two types of wine or mead are blended, perhaps by parents, to then be shared by the couple, symbolising their union as they step from individual lives into one.



9) **San San Kudo** is a Japanese ritual of “three, three, nine times.”



that began in the 1600s and so is one of the oldest ceremonial wedding traditions. This ceremony is a ritualized drinking of the couple’s sake and

sometimes their parents, which serves as a binding ceremony. There are three sakazuiki (ceremonial sake cups) stacked, one on top of the other in a tier. The bride and the groom sip from each cup three times, hence the “three, three, nine times.” Three cannot be divided in two, making it a fortunate number for weddings in Japanese culture and wedding traditions. If all parents join, expanding the number of couples to three, each couple might only sip once on each cup, instead of three times redefining the “three, three, nine times.”

10) **Saptapadi** in Hindu weddings follows a handfasting and involves the taking of seven steps together around a flame with each step representing a vow, aspiration, and aspect of married life (see also *Agni Hotra*).



10) **Circling the Sacred Fire** in a Hindu tradition, similar to the Saptapadi, where the couple may walk around a sacred fire in a connection to the natural world with the fire symbolising the elements.

11) **Agni Hotra** is an ancient fire ceremony which originated from the Hindu sacred scriptures known as the Vedas. *Agni* refers to fire and *Hotras* means, healing. Usually performed by a specially trained priest who make offerings of seeds (food), sugar (for forgiveness) into the fire

while reciting Sanskrit mantras to invoke blessings of health and abundance as the couple drinks the blessed water.

12) **The Water Pouring Ceremony** is a Buddhist

Tradition however water is of course utilised by a variety of cultures and religions because of its



cleansing and life-giving properties. In the Buddhist tradition, the water is poured from a sacred vessel over the couple’s hands, to symbolise purity, cleansing, and the unity of their lives.

13) **Water and Lava Rock** Ceremony is a Hawaiian Tradition ritual where a lava rock is wrapped in a Ti leaf and left at the wedding ceremony site as an offering to nature. In the ceremony, the couple pours water over the lava rock to represent the blending of their lives and the foundation of their marriage, symbolised in the strength and enduring nature of the rock.

14) **Jumping the Broom** is thought to be an



African-American tradition, though there are varying stories of its origin, one being that it is rooted in slavery times when slaves were not permitted to marry and so weddings were held in

secret with a the couple jumping over a broom held close to the ground, by family. The safest method is for the broom to be on the floor or ground to prevent it from being a trip hazard; however, some believe that the challenge presented by raising the broom represents the first challenge of the newly married couple and so it symbolises their ability to face all challenges together. The broom can then be used to decorate a place of honour in their home.

15) **Crossing Sticks** is a Caribbean Tradition, perhaps likened to the ‘Jumping the Broom’ where couples cross wooden sticks, representing the start of their life together.

16) **The Tea Ceremony** has its origins in China and



Japan and is used in many different Asian cultures. The couple serve tea to elders in respect and gratitude, usually before

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the wedding, but it can be incorporated into the wedding ceremony, perhaps with different teas blended to symbolise the merging of families as well as the service to each other.

17) In the Pagan **Stone Ritual**, the couple holds or places stones during the ceremony to symbolize the strength and endurance of their relationship.

18) The **Bell of Truce** is an Irish Tradition in which a wedding bell is rung as a cleansing, symbolising harmony and the end of any discord.



19) **Yoruba** is a Nigerian Tradition that includes the “*Tasting the Four Elements*” where the couple tastes foods that are sweet, sour, bitter, and hot to symbolise enduring all aspects of life together.

20) **Bread, Salt and Wine** originates from Slavic cultures, with the wine added in Polish tradition. The mothers of the bride and groom welcome the couple by offering them a tray on which there is bread, salt and wine. A modern variation is that the wait staff greet the couple with a tray as they enter the reception.



The bread, a symbol of prosperity and the wish that they may always have food. The bread is dipped into the salt, a symbol of the bitterness and hardship, and then consumed with the sweet wine symbolising the sweetness and joy of life, and so in combination, the mothers are handing over the care of their children with their wishes for prosperity and joy, and that the couple will always face any hardships together. The unity here is not just in the mother's actions but also in the couple's first meal and action as a married couple.

21) **Ring Warming Ceremony**, where the Wedding rings, are passed around for guests to warm with their hands and to imbue with their good wishes. Variations include the rings being placed in a bag, or tied together with a ribbon. If the rings are passed around the entire gathering, they are best escorted and given to the back row so that they arrive at the front in time for the ring exchange.



22) **The Chuppah** is a wedding canopy, that represents the couple's new home and their unity under one roof. It's open on all sides, symbolising hospitality and community and may be carried by family members in unison to cover and protect the couple.



23) **Smoking Ceremony** is a traditional First Nation People's ritual that involves the slow burning of native leaves, usually eucalyptus, to produce smoke, as a cleansing for individuals, and for the ceremonial space, warding off any bad spirits or ill-will and marking a new start in harmony.



24) **Lei Exchange** is not just a Hawaiian wedding tradition, but the exchange of leis is common throughout all Pacific Islands as a symbol of love, honour and respect. The lei is placed around the necks of the couple by the parents to honour and welcome them in unity, and are also exchanged by partners, to signify the affection between the couple.



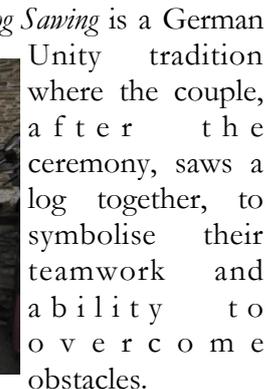
25) **A Tree Planting** symbolises growth, strength, nurturing and a unity with nature; and when many hands are involved, it highlight the unity of action and family.



26) **Mangalasutra** is an Indian Tradition performed by the groom who ties a sacred necklace, usually gold, around the bride's neck, symbolising marital commitment.



27) **Baumstamm Sägen** or *Log Sawing* is a German Unity tradition where the couple, after the ceremony, saws a log together, to symbolise their teamwork and ability to overcome obstacles.



(Continued on page 10)



(Continued from page 9)

28) **The Crowning** is a Nordic ritual where crowns made of wild flowers are used to symbolise the nobility of marriage.



29) The **Stafana**, originating in Greek Orthodox weddings, is a ritual involving crowns are connected by a ribbon and placed on the couple's heads. The crowns are exchanged three times to symbolise the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but outside of the church, the crowns may be switched by the Civil Celebrant, the parents or members of the wedding party simply to symbolise the couple's importance on this day and their responsibilities of unity in the kingdom of their new life together.



30) **Ransom for the Bride** is a playful Slavic Tradition where the groom must complete tasks or pay a mock ransom to the bride's family to "retrieve" her.

31) **Paebaek**, (also spelled pyebaek) is a Korean unification Tradition, historically performed



after the main wedding ceremony to symbolise the entrance of the bride into her husband's household. It involves formal bowing, a tea ceremony, and the couple catching chestnuts and dates symbolising children and a healthy marriage.

32) **A Sword Ceremony** has evolved in various cultures. In the Nordic tradition, the groom passes his ancestral sword to his bride, to symbolise the transfer of protection to the home, while the bride may give the groom a sword representing loyalty and unity.



33) **The Kava Ceremony**, also known as an Ava Ceremony in Samoa, is a traditional practice that holds deep cultural significance across the Pacific and is integral to social hierarchy,



symbolising respect and unity. The ceremony is often conducted during important milestones such as weddings and birthdays, serving as a time for family and friends to gather, share stories, and strengthen bonds. Additionally, the ceremony involves the sharing of a drink made from the kava root, the Ceremony plays a vital role in fostering community.



34) **The Circle Dance** sometimes portrayed as a traditional Danish dance but different forms are practiced throughout Europe where guests circle around the bride, but in the Dutch tradition, the bride later cuts off the toe of her shoe to symbolize never running away from her husband.

35) **The Zaffa** is an exciting musical procession



of drums, dancers, and performers to celebrate the couple which originates from Egyptian, Arabic and Levant Tradition.

- <https://www.thecelebrantdirectory.com/unity-rituals-from-around-the-world/>
- ['Ava ceremony - Wikipedia](#)
- [https://japanesestyle.com/japanese-wedding-traditions-san-san-kudo/?srsltid=AfmBOopFEcXs\\_vXzF3HVa7\\_TAeJ11Lx--fuAcNMLAsKmmAS\\_UCVbPw5p](https://japanesestyle.com/japanese-wedding-traditions-san-san-kudo/?srsltid=AfmBOopFEcXs_vXzF3HVa7_TAeJ11Lx--fuAcNMLAsKmmAS_UCVbPw5p)
- <https://www.brides.com/paebaek-ceremony-5091739>



# ROMANCE SCAMS

## The 48-hour rom-con: How the business of romance scams target heart & wallets.

The AFP issued a media release on 9th February 2026, in preparation of Valentine's Day and details as follows:

They say time is money. For romance scammers, the clock starts ticking the second they hit send on a message to a potential victim. And the window to hook them can be as little as 48 hours.

In the lead-up to Valentine's Day, the Joint Policing Cybercrime Coordination Centre (JPC3) is spotlighting romance scams, which were the third-most reported scam type in Australia in 2025, sitting at 3432 (Scamwatch).

It's a horrific crime type, which has shaped a profitable business model from cruelty, victim baiting and heartache. And it unfolds in rapid-fire scenarios that can seem all too believable.

To give an example...

- You receive a direct message from a stranger online. You seem to have an instant connection and share similar interests. Your pets even have the same name.
- The stranger is overly affectionate and is eager to move your conversation to another private or encrypted chat application. If asked why, they're ready with a reason: "I don't check messages here often, let's use WhatsApp/Telegram," or "Can we text? It's easier for me".
- For some people, this request for a new environment can feel urgent and premature, raising red flags and bringing contact to a halt. But for others, it can feel like the hopeful next step in a whirlwind romance. So, they accept the request.
- From there the tailored grooming begins – all in the pursuit of financial deception.

In 2025, \$28 million was reportedly stolen by romance scammers in Australia, with 71 per cent of them reported following online contact (2437 reports) (Scamwatch).

Demographics at a higher risk of being targeted include individuals older than 55, widows or recently separated individuals, and retirees. Scammers also target people who may be feeling vulnerable while rebuilding confidence after life changes such as retirement, relocation or health troubles.

While scammers worked from myriad playbooks

depending on the situation, AFP Detective Superintendent Marie Andersson said there were initial tell-tale signs a new romantic interest could be a scammer.

- "A request or pressure to move a conversation off a dating or social media platform not long after initial contact can be a first red flag," Det Supt Andersson said.
- "Reason being is dating and social media platforms often have safety features and detection measures, which scammers want to get away from as soon as possible."
- "Once a scammer has moved the conversation to a different platform, the victim is also isolated, meaning it can be easier to prey on their vulnerability, optimism and emotional investment to stop them walking away."
- "Other warning signs include lots of attention or affection (love-bombing), oversharing of personal or emotional stories, having reasons why they can't meet in person or video chat, and encouraging victims to keep their interactions private from family and friends, often under the guise that these other parties wouldn't understand."

Det Supt Andersson said the timeframe of 48 hours as being critical to whether scammers hooked their victim was an anecdotal learning. It illustrated the big-business model of the scam industry, with scammers communicating with multiple victims at once to amplify their criminality.

"Scammers, who mostly work in call centres or boiler rooms overseas, have scripts and playbooks to follow, receive coaching, and operate 24/7 to deploy the best tactics to deceive innocent victims," Det Supt Andersson said.

"Their modus operandi is to hook victims quickly, but they are then in it for the long haul, looking to draw the connection out for as long as possible to scam as much money as they can.

"This then creates a 'double hit' for their victims who, when the truth eventually emerges, are left to grieve not only the emotional impact of a relationship they believed was real, but also the financial damage, shame, isolation and loss of trust."

To help educate people about romance scams, the JPC3 has launched [ClickFit: Romance Scams](#), a national awareness campaign supported by law enforcement across Australia, that offers simple but effective methods to protect yourself when online dating. They include:

- ◇ Keep chats on the dating platform until you're sure the person is legitimate;

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

- ◇ Verify the person by checking their social media presence or reverse-image searching photos;
- ◇ Ask to video call or meet in person, but be mindful of AI-generated video calls that may look and sound glitchy or appear blurry;
- ◇ Never send money or share accounts to anyone you have met online;
- ◇ Be aware of love-bombing, emotional manipulation and pressure tactics; and
- ◇ Talk to friends, family, or anyone you trust to get a second opinion if you are unsure.

From 9<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> February, police across Australia will host a National Week of Prevention, delivering presentations to help Australians understand the warning signs of romance scams and navigate online dating with caution and confidence.

If you're interested in attending an event, or in police delivering a presentation in your area, contact your local police for more information or visit [www.afp.gov.au/clickfit](http://www.afp.gov.au/clickfit) for additional resources

Examples

**Case study 1**

Divorced female victim in her 50s met a man on a chat group who was supposedly interested in a relationship and marriage.

He claimed to be rich and sent her fake ID photos, pictures and videos.

After one month of conversation, the man convinced the victim to invest in a fake AI application.

Over a week, the victim transferred more than \$600,000 to an overseas bank, including a significant portion borrowed from her mortgage.

After seeking further advice, she realised the person was a scammer.

The victim reported the matter to ReportCyber and her bank.

It is unlikely the funds will be recovered.

**Case study 2**



Male victim in his 60s was in what he believed was a relationship with a person online for two years. The victim sent the scammer money using various platforms, including bank, remittance agencies, PayPal and cryptocurrency.

The scammer convinced the victim to make a house purchase, for which he took out a further mortgage.

Each time the victim tried to recover money he would be threatened and intimidated and given another reason to send more funds.

His total loss was up to \$800,000.

The victim attended his local police station to report the matter.

Police have referred the matter to Philippines authorities as a suspected money mule account has been identified.

**About the JPC3**

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

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

Watch our [cybercrime prevention videos](#) and protect yourself from being a victim of cybercrime.

If there is an immediate threat to life or risk of harm, call [000](#).

If you are a victim of cybercrime, report it to police using [Report Cyber](#).

- [The 48-hour rom-con: how the business of romance scams target heart and wallets | Australian Federal Police](#)

An unusual educational resource, a PowerPoint, has been released and can be accessed at these links

⇒ [Hightail - Xcc6Xq5QUJ](#)

⇒ [ClickFit assets are available via Hightail](#)



# 21 Rules Every Marriage Should Follow

As Celebrants, we should always speak up for marriage.

Power of Positivity is an online site that focuses on the positive aspects of life and has over 34 million followers. Kristen & Chris Butler founded the organisation in 2009, seeing it as their mission to celebrate the lifestyle of positive thinking and attitude.



As Celebrants, we can also focus on these aspects in our own relationships in our advertising and of course, in ceremony scripts to help our couples ensure successful marriages. Few Celebrants are qualified marriage counsellors but that doesn't prevent us from referring couples to useful books, websites, and videos or even making suggestions based on experience as the editor did after 25 years of marriage which has now extended to almost 50 years.

In a Power of Positivity article created back in 2023 and republished in March 2015, and again in February 2026, the focus was on what creates happy relationships, and therefore a happier marriage. They gathered what they term “*some of the best bits of advice around to help you live your happiest life together...*” and listed them as:

## Twenty one, Non– Negotiable Rules Every Marriage Should Follow.

- 1) **Marriage Means You Must Find the Good:** It is easy to overlook the little annoyances of our partner when we're focused on the good qualities that attracted us in the first place. Stay focused on the good.
- 2) **Find Your Happy:** Do something daily that makes you happy and your relationships will benefit. You can't be happy in a relationship, if you aren't happy with yourself.
- 3) **Forgive the Imperfections:** Forgiving is such an important ingredient in relationships. Holding on to things that make you angry keeps you in a negative space and prevent you from being your best self.

### 25 ways to 'be' in your marriage

1. Be forgiving – no matter what, always forgive before you end the day, always make-up and kiss kindly and thoughtfully, with a loving wish of goodnight.
2. Be Committed – to each other and to the marriage
3. Be Patient
4. Be Considerate
5. Be Loving
6. Be Loyal
7. Be Faithful
8. Be Respectful
9. Be Social - Don't isolate yourself or your partner from friends or family
10. Be Thoughtful – if/when you argue, always have a plan to improve
11. Be Adventurous In All Things – seek & share new experiences together
12. Be Positive & Fun find the pleasures in each day and enjoy them, laugh often
13. Be Mindful Of Each Other & Always Remember Your Vows. They are the promises you made to each other and to yourself and can help you through any difficulty
14. Be Together take time every day, to enjoy each others' company.
15. Be Communicative talk to each other and listen to each other
16. Be Positive—focus on the good and what you can achieve together
17. Be Protective, of yourself, of your marriage and of each other
18. Be Alert to each others' feelings, to each others needs
19. Be Interesting and interested
20. Be Sharing
21. Be Supportive
22. Be Focused on the relationship with each other, that is named 'marriage' which must be your priority above your career, your work, your other distractions
23. Be Relaxed – holiday annually and rejuvenate your relationship
24. Be Clean & Tidy – we all have different standards but your personal hygiene and general conduct can have a significant impact on your relationship (but don't be OCD)
25. Be Budget Conscious –relationships can fall apart because of financial stresses so make sure you apply all the above rules when Working together on your budget

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- 4) **Successful Marriage Begins With You:** Trying to change your partner will only backfire so focus on your contribution. Tackle only what you can control.
- 5) **Make Your Marriage a Priority:** Take care of it, nurture it and let it grow.
- 6) **Express Your Love Daily:** Be open with your expressions of love.
- 7) **Savor the Good:** Appreciating and enjoying the good in your relationship attracts more good and your relationship becomes stronger and better. “*Marriage is like a fine wine, if tended properly, it just gets better with age.*” ~ Unknown -
- 8) **Make Self-Care a Priority:** You can't take care of your relationships if you aren't taking care of yourself. Make it a priority.
- 9) **Learn from the Past and Dream of the Future:** Find the lessons from the past and use them to help you shape your future.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

- 10) **Marriage Means Learning Something New Every Day:** Learn to love learning. Learning is the key to growth and evolution. And growth is the key to strong relationships.
- 11) **Live in the Now:** Stay focused on what really matters and don't let life's distractions keep you from living in the moment.
- 12) **Celebrate The Best of Each Other:** Make every day a celebration of the good in your relationship and in each other.
- 13) **Be Kind and Generous:** Do something special every day. A little note, a surprise cup of coffee or a simple phone call just to say hi, will go a long way to showing your partner how much you value them.
- 14) **Actions Speak Louder Than Words:** Make sure your actions show your love. Often times what you do and how you do it says more than expressing your love with words.
- 15) **Invest Your Time:** Nothing takes the place of spending time on the relationships that matter most.
- 16) **Give a Free Pass:** There are bound to be things that annoy you about your partner. Commit to accept them and let them go.
- 17) **It's The Little Things:** It's isn't the grand gestures that say love, it is all the little things we do every day.
- 18) **Be Supportive:** It is easy to be in a relationship when things are going well but it's the tough times that strengthens the bond. Remember to be there, be supportive, and ask for help when you need it.
- 19) **Marriage Maintenance Matters:** Make sure your relationship gets your regular care. It becomes more costly if you wait too long.
- 20) **Think Freely:** Fostering your creative, thinking mind will keep you happy and thriving in your relationships.
- 21) **Be Committed:** It's simple, really; you have to be willing to go through the valleys as much as you are willing to go through the peaks. Put yourself all in and stay in it for the long haul.



You can find almost identical rules from this YouTube site published by [Building Relationships 20](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1w4zCBePURq0c). That site has only 93 followers and

the video has been watched just 660 times since it was posted in May 2020

- [https://youtu.be/ypnyE\\_hmqLo?si=uAY9q52Pg\\_67-i0f](https://youtu.be/ypnyE_hmqLo?si=uAY9q52Pg_67-i0f)

Another YouTube site of interest is from May of 2000, when author, Dr. John Gottman was in New York to meet with publishers about his upcoming book "*The Seven*

*Principles for Making Marriage Work*," which became a New York Times best-seller. Not convinced that the book would ever sell, the head of marketing asked Dr. Gottman, "Tell me one thing I can do in 30 seconds to improve my marriage!" . Dr Gottman tells the story in this video.

- <https://youtube.com/shorts/yivL0HcfY8?si=C1W4zCBePURq0c>

You can visit for more relationship advice:

- <https://info.gottman.com/relationship...>

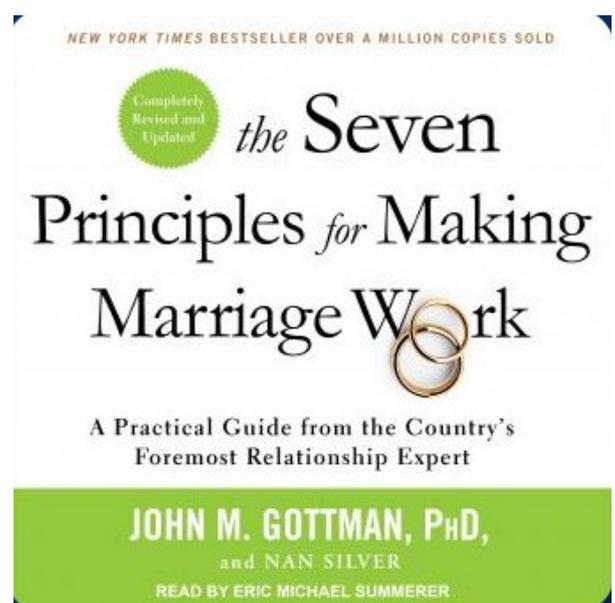
Dr. John Gottman's books include:

- The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert <https://a.co/d/deinvfd>
- Fight Right: How Successful Couples Turn Conflict Into Connection <https://a.co/d/cQQcdd5>
- The Love Prescription: Seven Days to More Intimacy, Connection, and Joy (The Seven Days Series) <https://a.co/d/aRwlhNn>
- Eight Dates: Essential Conversations for a Lifetime of Love <https://a.co/d/bJFUdtW>



"*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*," is also available as an audiobook:

- [https://www.audiobooks.com/audiobook/seven-principles-for-making-marriage-work-a-practical-guide-from-the-countrys-foremost-relationship-expert-revised-and-updated/392971?refId=73624&gad\\_source=5&gad\\_campaignid=20065328288&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIsViV57nukgMVhSiDAx0bqzB-EAAYBSAAEgKNzvD\\_BwE](https://www.audiobooks.com/audiobook/seven-principles-for-making-marriage-work-a-practical-guide-from-the-countrys-foremost-relationship-expert-revised-and-updated/392971?refId=73624&gad_source=5&gad_campaignid=20065328288&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIsViV57nukgMVhSiDAx0bqzB-EAAYBSAAEgKNzvD_BwE)





Reviews here are always about what Celebrants can learn from books and videos and how they might inspire us, or prepare us. Usually, when a TV series is reviewed, it is because there is a Ceremony in one or more episodes, but 'This England' is a little different. This drama following the

events surrounding UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his government in the face of the first wave of COVID-19.

Watching the series immediately brought back the memories and the traumas of that horrible era when isolation, social distances, masks, repeated sanitation, vaccination and much more occurred to save millions of lives. The reviewer recalls wedding with just witnesses who stood apart, funerals where 7 family members had to sit 2 metres apart, and none of us can forget the numerous deaths that followed a funeral as well as at a wedding, each held in western Sydney. There was also that funeral in the USA that resulted in 48 deaths in three generations of a large family. We certainly don't want those horrors to return and yet they could and so we can learn a lot from this dramatic series when we see authorities totally unprepared for the world devastation that followed.

This powerful series based on real events, most particularly highlights that we must always be cautious when interacting with crowds, as we Celebrants do.



• [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12594678/mediaviewer/rm2968060929/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_i](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12594678/mediaviewer/rm2968060929/?ref_=tt_ov_i)



On Prime, this is an amazing cast including [Pierce Brosnan](#), [Helena Bonham Carter](#) and [Gabriel Byrne](#), a setting in coastal Ireland, a bit of haunting as well as fun Irish music, poetry and painting revolving around parallel stories of love and loss, and of course, adding a wedding, it would seem to be the perfect movie for a celebrant. Be warned that this story does include great tragedy that some might find distressing, and well you only get a glimpse of that wedding, and none of the funerals; so why recommend this movie to celebrants?

The promo tells us that the movie is based on Niall Williams' best-selling novel in which Nicholas and Isabel were made for each other but how will they ever know it? As ghosts, fate and the sheer power of true love pull them together, so too does life threaten to tear them apart.

Irish are known for their poetic hearts and this does not disappoint. Story telling is an art form just as is poetry and painting. Any lover of poetry will tell you that beauty and hope arise from tragedy and pain.

Without giving away the complete plot, because there are surprises if you haven't read the book, this is a beautifully crafted Irish love story and we know that every celebrant loves a love story.

• [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13020386/?ref\\_=ttfc\\_ov\\_bk](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13020386/?ref_=ttfc_ov_bk)

## We

By Lou Szymkow, 04/09/2018

We played, we laughed  
 We grew, we smiled,  
 We felt each other's pains and enjoyed each other's gains  
 We were children and then we were teens  
 We lived our lives and all the in-betweens  
 We fell in love along the way and now cannot imagine it being any other way  
 We now take each others' hands and hearts and today exchange rings, so we'll never be apart

## A Love Poem

Lou Szymkow 14/2/2000

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.



## What Love Means To me

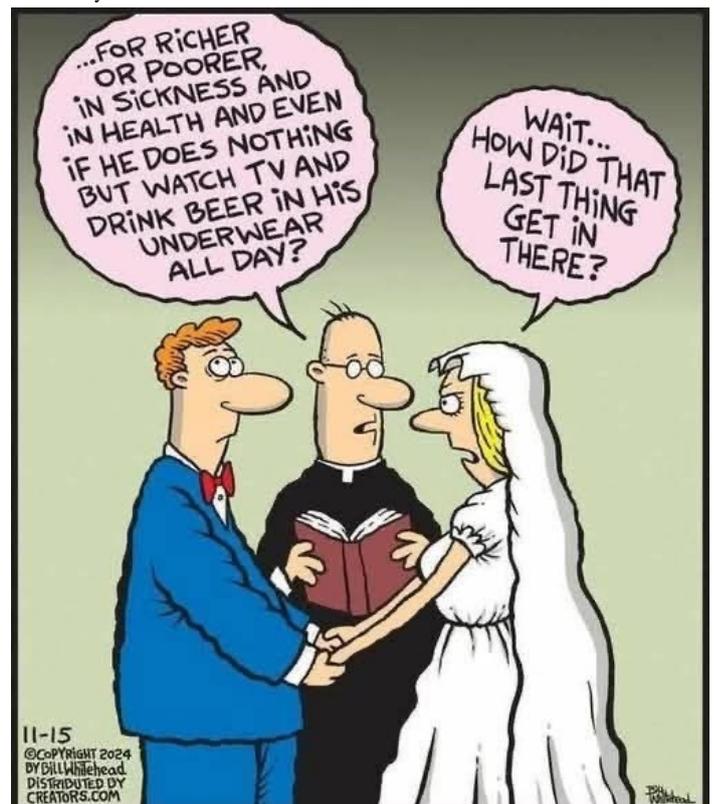
by Pravin Gupta

When you love someone so much,  
 That hours with her thoughts just fly away,  
 When her memories fill you with pleasure,  
 No matter what time it be in the night or day.

When she walks in when you dream,  
 And walks with you through life's unending bend,  
 You keep your eyes closed, even if awake,  
 Wishing the dream will never end.

Love is not what it is to fulfill your desires,  
 To make your life light up like the dawn,  
 It's a feeling within - a thirst with no end,  
 A pain so exciting you wish it is never gone.

It's like the waterfall - drops glistening as they fall,  
 A wind that touches you and blows away,  
 A fragrance that envelopes you but does not stay,  
 A night that goes - promising to meet soon on life's way.



# COORDINATOR COMMENTS



We can help our communities just by doing what we do best—celebrating love. Promote the beauty of connection, the joy of unity, the wonders of marriage.

The news of yet another war is devastating. and in Australia, politicians seek to gain populist favour by propagating divisive claims to generate fear and hate while certain media outlets thrive on continually pushing the outlandish negative to gain readership. Actions of course have consequences and now to a record number of people have been arrested for threats or actions against certain groups in our community and against politicians. This is horrendous and not in keeping with the Australian values of a fair go for all.

For us Celebrants, we also discover that when there is an expectation of future joy, weddings increase but when there is a reduction in hope and optimism, bookings reduce. We saw it with the Covid period and then with the interest rate increases and now the media is filled with despair.

It is now more important than ever that we focus on the good in life and in our community. WE have the opportunity in our advertising and in our ceremonies to offer hope, optimism and joy. We can and do promote happiness, love, marriage.

We Celebrate life.

I have visited about 26 countries and loved every single one but still find that Australia is the best country on Earth. Our climate, the vastness, our unique flora & fauna, our incredible diversity and friendliness.. And of course the unique Celebrancy program where we, Celebrants, can perform ceremonies anywhere in our incredible land.

Whenever I travel, I feel a great sense of happiness when I see the south coast beaches. Without even thinking, a huge smile spreads across my face and warms the soul.



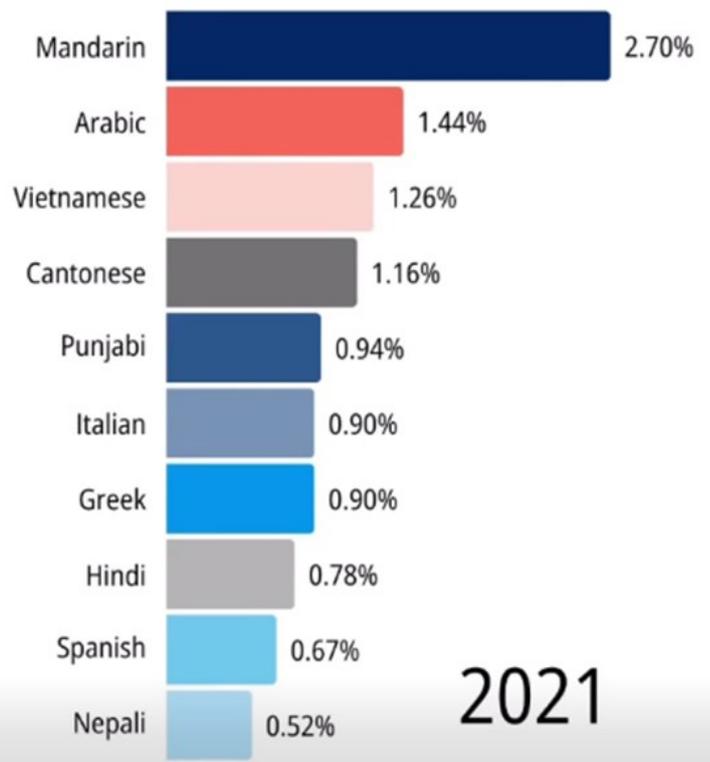
# Letters to the Editor

Thank you Lou, I hope you are well and enjoyed Christmas and New Year holidays. I appreciate your time and effort with these newsletters. Stay well and hope you have an excellent year ahead. Kind regards Julie Pena

Thanks so much for another wonderful Newsletter Lou. You are amazing! Warmest regards, Mandi Gill

## Non-English languages most spoken at home

By % of the Australian population



2021

Note: Refers to main language used at home. Based on place of usual residence, excludes overseas visitors. Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing