

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

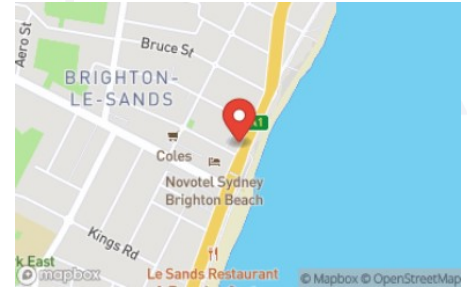
AMC 50 Years of Celebrancy



Conference 2023
Novotel Brighton Le Sands NSW

Saturday 26th August 2023

Cnr Grand Pde & Princess St.
Brighton Le Sands, NSW 2216



BOOKINGS

All Day Conference AMC Members:

- \$245 for 1st 50 bookings
- Regular price for members is \$260.
- Accommodation: \$310 or \$155 share.
- Combined Conference and accommodation for AMC Members is Saturday night \$555
- Accommodation includes parking & Breakfast.
- Friday night 25/08/2023 accommodation is \$310 or \$155 share

All Day Conference Non-Members

- Non members is \$265 for the 1st 50 bookings
- Non members regular price is \$280
- Combined Conference and accommodation for Non members is \$575

* Please be aware that once you have booked and paid for the accommodation, there are no refunds. However, you may transfer the room to another celebrant.

Book Now to secure your accommodation for Saturday night as rooms are booking fast.

Booking Link:

<https://marriagecelebrants.org.au/amc-conference/#booking>

Email: amconference2023@gmail.com

Friday 25th August 2023



(optional) Canapes and drinks will be served to early arrival members. A great time to meet those you've chatted to online or just to catch up and network

Saturday 26th August 2023

9:15am Opening of the AMC by the



incredible **Mr Dally Messenger III** who will speak on the history of Celebrancy and we know it was be illuminating because one of the longest serving and influential Celebrants, he has lived it.

as **Dally Messenger III** is a well known pioneer of civil celebrancy. In the

1960s he was the first person ever to apply to become a Civil Marriage Celebrant under the provisions of the new Commonwealth Marriage Act of Australia (1961).

In the 1970s he was one of a group of marriage-reformers who helped persuade the reforming Attorney-General Lionel Murphy to introduce civil marriage celebrants in Australia.

Highly acclaimed as an author, publisher, educator, commentator, and a founder & chronicler of the civil celebrant movement which originated here in Australia.

Dally Messenger III is indeed a pioneer of civil celebrancy and it is an honour to have him attend.



Marcus Kroek

Marcus, as well as being a Celebrant and author, is recognised as a leading presenter, trainer and workshop facilitator, particularly for the small, business owner.

He specialises in implementing simple yet highly effective methods to increase profits, work smarter and maximise long term wealth.

**Gala Dinner
&
entertainment
6.30pm.**



Craig Moran

A Civil Celebrant since 1995, Craig Moran is an experienced corporate businessman who has reinvented himself as a Civil Marriage Celebrant and Funeral Celebrant Business Development Manager. Craig has presented Funeral workshops for celebrants and will present *“How to break into the funeral industry.”*



Martin Moroney

A marriage celebrant for 16 years, he has, conducted hundreds of marriage ceremonies.

He has a background is in behavioural science and he uses these skills to design ceremonies that truly surprise and delight, and even astonish, the couples he serves. Martin has always been on a mission to help celebrants lift their game, achieve more job satisfaction, and charge fees that reflect the professionalism of the work that they do. He coaches and mentors new celebrants to help them leapfrog the years of “learning by doing” that newly appointed celebrants have to endure.

He has been a popular presenter at previous conferences and has the reputation for delivering enjoyable, fast paced, and highly informative workshops.



KNOWLEDGE BASE

We need knowledge at our fingertips to ensure we can confidently respond to challenges. I will endeavour to provide information in each newsletter to expand our personal knowledge base.



IMMIGRATION LETTERS

Immigration Agents sometimes ask for a copy of the NOIM to support an partner visa application however a competent agent should know that the DHA will not request a copy of the NOIM.

As Celebrants we are of course unable to provide advice on visa or immigration related enquiries or requirements, and such matters need to be directed to the [Department of Home Affairs](<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/>) (DHA). DHA can be contacted from inside Australia on telephone 131 881 and from outside Australia on +61 2 6196 0196

According the MLCS on numerous occasions, the Department of Home Affairs has confirmed that a copy of the NOIM is NOT required for visa application purposes and that a letter from the celebrant on letterhead, confirming the lodgement of a NOIM is sufficient as evidence of intent to solemnise a marriage between two parties.

Be certain that the letter is accurate and truthful as you may be required to attend a court or tribunal to defend or substantiate your letter in an if it is challenged.

Celebrants are NOT required to include an A number on letterheads or a NOIM copy as an authorisation can be ascertained from a check of the public register.

Generally, the original NOIM should only be released by an authorised celebrant to the couple where the original document is required by a Prescribed Authority when seeking a Shortening of Time SOT). However there is nothing preventing the celebrant from providing a party to the marriage with a copy of the NOIM, as it contains the couple's own personal information but:

- Marriage celebrants should not provide a copy of the NOIM directly to third parties.

- The copy should be clearly marked as a 'COPY'
- A copy of the NOIM provided in this instance is not a replacement for the original held by the celebrant.
- The Celebrant's 'A' number should be removed or redacted so that it will not be disclosed prior to the solemnisation
- Ultimately, the NOIM contains the information of both parties to the marriage and it is at their discretion to provide such information to a third

SAMPLE

SAMPLE IMMIGRATION LETTER

<date>

To whom it may concern;

I am a Civil Marriage Celebrant, authorized under the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961, to conduct marriages within Australian borders.

This letter is to advise and confirm that the following couple are to be married: <...> and <...>

Their identities have been confirmed and a Notice of Intended Marriage (NOIM) was completed, by them as required under the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961, and that NOIM was lodged with me on: <date>.

They have paid a fee to me to conduct their Ceremony and they are scheduled to marry in my presence and in the presence of witnesses, on: **date**

The Ceremony will take place at : **location**

Yours faithfully

DIVORCE: How do I prove I am divorced or my marriage was legally annulled?



If a party to a marriage has been married before, they have to prove that they are no longer married.

If divorced, they need to provide documentary evidence obtainable from the court where divorced.

If the divorce was granted outside of Australia they will need to contact the relevant court or authority in the country where the divorce was granted. If the divorce certificate is not in English, they must have it translated into English by a registered translator. On occasions a *Certificate of No Impediment to Marriage*, usually obtained through the embassy of the country where they commonly reside or retain citizenship, may be required.

Note that Marriage Annulment by a Church is not the same as a divorce under the law. An annulment can only be accepted if decreed by a relevant court. If the previous marriage was legally annulled in the Philippines, they will need to provide a Certificate of No Marriage (CENOMAR), issued in the Philippines, as proof.

If you recently divorced in Australia you can access specific information on the process and apply online, at this link: [Comcourt applications](#))

If you are unsure of any of the questions in the application form, you can email enquiries@fcfcoa.gov.au

In Australia, the proof of divorce process allows you to request a search of the records of the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia. Where a divorce can be proven, you will be provided with an official document that serves as proof that a divorce was granted and finalised.

If the divorce was granted in Western Australia you will need to contact the [Family Court of Western Australia](#) to obtain proof of divorce.

When a divorce is granted in Australia a decree nisi is pronounced.

This is a provisional decree of divorce pronounced when the court is satisfied that a person has met the legal and procedural requirements to obtain a divorce.

Following the pronouncement of a decree nisi, the marriage still exists until the divorce becomes absolute (finalised) one month and one day later unless, in extreme circumstances, an order is made by the court to bring that date forward. This time period also allows for a divorce to be rescinded.

The decree absolute is the final decree that dissolves the marriage. A divorce order issues once a divorce becomes absolute (is finalised) and it cannot be rescinded or appealed – refer to s.93 of the Family Law Act 1975.

Parties who subsequently request proof of divorce are provided with the document issued when the divorce became final.

The document issued by the courts following a divorce becoming final has changed over time as a consequence

of legislative and other amendments:

1. Prior to 1975 and the introduction of the Family Law Act 1975, divorces were dealt with in Supreme Courts in states or territories of Australia.
2. From 1975 to July 2002 a divorce order issued which included the Decree Nisi and Decree Absolute in the one document.
3. From July 2002 to 2 August 2005 a Divorce Certificate issued which included the Decree Nisi and Decree Absolute in the one document.
4. From 2 August 2005 until 12 February 2010 a Divorce Certificate issued which provided only the Decree Absolute as evidence that a divorce had become absolute or final.
5. From 13 February 2010 until the present a digital divorce order is issued which confirms that the divorce was pronounced and then became final. This digital order is the only official original record of divorce issued by the court and has an electronic signature and seal.

- Divorce orders produced in an electronic format from 13 February 2010 to 17 December 2011 have a black seal and signature including order and certificate.

- Divorce orders produced in an electronic format from 17 December 2011 to present have a red seal and blue signature including order and certificate.

If your divorce was finalised after 12 February 2010 and you were a party to the proceedings you can obtain your divorce record from the Commonwealth Courts Portal at no cost.

The Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia have produced divorce orders in an electronic format since February 2010 including an electronic seal and signature. These orders include a certification pursuant to section 56 of the Family Law Act 1975 of the fact that the divorce order took effect on the date indicated.

If the divorce was granted prior to 1976 in Australia, you will need to contact the Supreme Court in the state or territory where the divorce was granted. The current family law system was established in 1975 and prior to this supreme courts administered applications for and the granting of divorce.

If your divorce was finalised prior to 13 February 2010 or you were not a party to the divorce you should complete the online form and you may be charged a fee of around \$30 - \$46

You can access specific information on the Australian process at this link

[Comcourt applications/ Apply online](https://eservices.comcourts.gov.au/epod_applications/new) (https://eservices.comcourts.gov.au/epod_applications/new)

If you are unsure of any of the questions in the application form, you can email enquiries@fcfcoa.gov.au



Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages

Click and Collect

Couples can now access their Marriage Certificates faster through our Click and Collect service. Customers have the option to apply online and collect their marriage certificates from our Chippen-dale Office or have it delivered by Express Post.

For couples needing their certificates urgently and would like to collect, please direct them to the link below to apply after you have registered the marriage via eRegistry:

https://onlineforms.bdm.nsw.gov.au/application/marriage_details

Please note: the delivery option to **Collect** is not available through eRegistry until further notice. This is due to a technical limitation which is currently being investigated. An update will be sent when this option becomes available. For non-urgent certificates, you can still apply on behalf of the couple in eRegistry after registration. Your paid certificate applications are received immediately, certificate printed and dispatched within 24-48hrs.

eRegistry Enhancement

Attaching your documents is now a simpler process as we have now introduced a new **Add Document** button to all section of your Marriage Notification. As per the Guidelines to the Marriage Act, you are required to send copies of the Official Certificate of Marriage, Declarations of No Legal Impediment, and NOIM (together with any supporting documents) to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM).

This button will enable you to add your marriage documents whilst editing your Marriage Notification readying it for submission.

Add Document **View Errors** **Save** **Discard**

Please note: the **Add Document** button is only activated after you have saved your Marriage Notification.

The information on this and the following page is directly from the NSW BDM

Can I post in my marriage documents to the Registry?

If you are an eRegistry user and are unable to scan paperwork to send electronically, please post your documents to:

NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages
ATT: Marriage Registration team
GPO Box 30 SYDNEY NSW 2001

The notification number and year should be clearly written on the top right-hand side of EACH page in this order.

- Certificate of Marriage (COM) Form 16
- Declarations of no impediment
- NOIM pages 3 and 4
- Other supporting documentation such as Commonwealth Statutory Declarations, evidence for the approval of shortening of time, interpreter's forms etc.

eRegistry users can apply for certificates for a period of two months from the date of marriage

If you are not an eRegistry user, please post documents to the same address.

It is only at this time you can apply for a marriage certificate for the Couple without the necessity of providing identification from the couple or yourself.

Lodging Docs

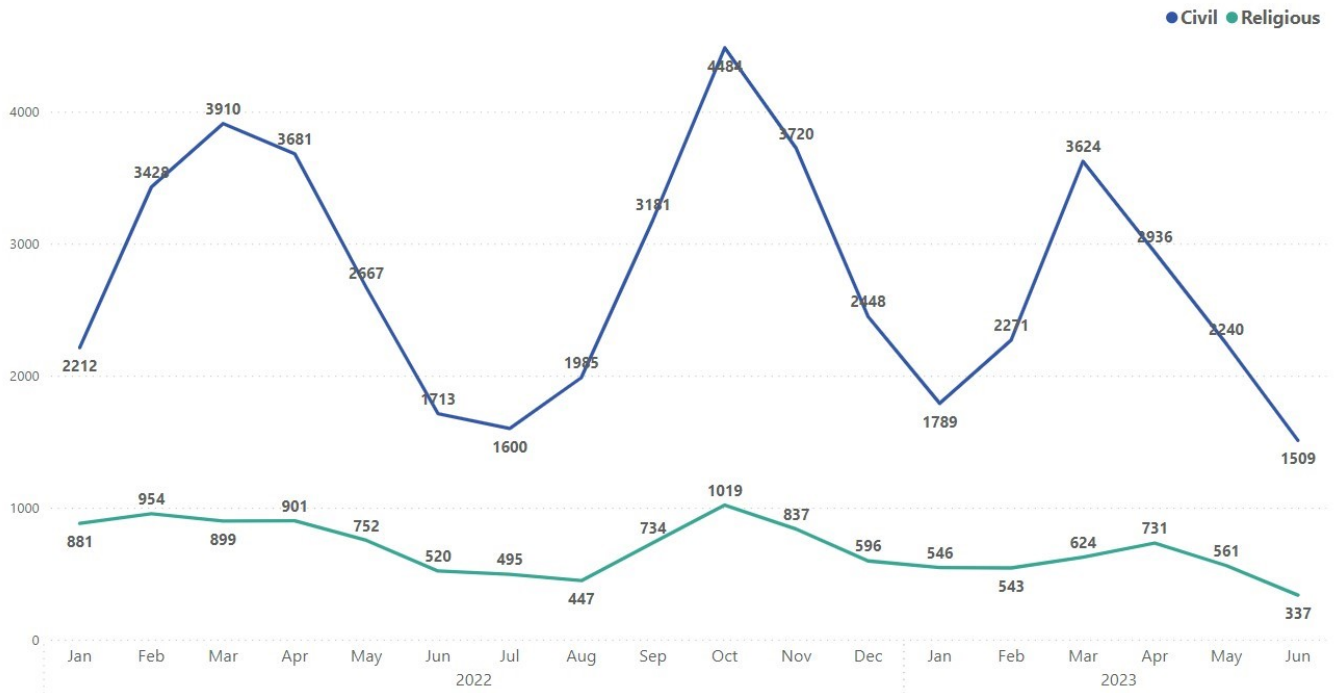
When registering marriages online, you can either attach scans of the documents at the time of lodgement, or if you are unable to attach documents successfully, you can email docs an attachment to:

online.celebrant@customerservice.nsw.gov.au.

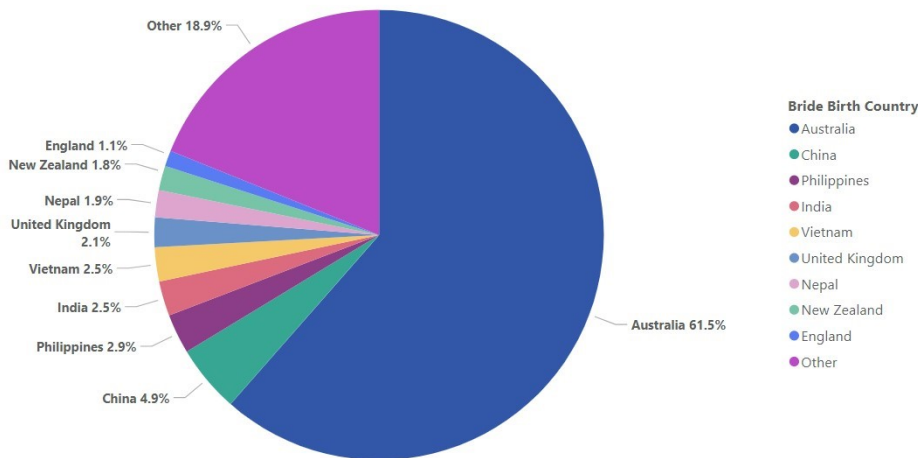
BDM Support Contacts

- **certificates ordered by couple:**
Phone Service NSW on 13 77 88
- **certificates ordered for the couple via Lifelink:**
online.celebrant@customerservice.nsw.gov.au
Ph. 02 6885 9332
- **Registration corrections**
[Correct an entry | NSW Government](#)
online.celebrant@customerservice.nsw.gov.au
Ph. 02 6885 9334
- **Eregistry support**
registry-support@customerservice.nsw.gov.au
Ph. 02 6885 9332

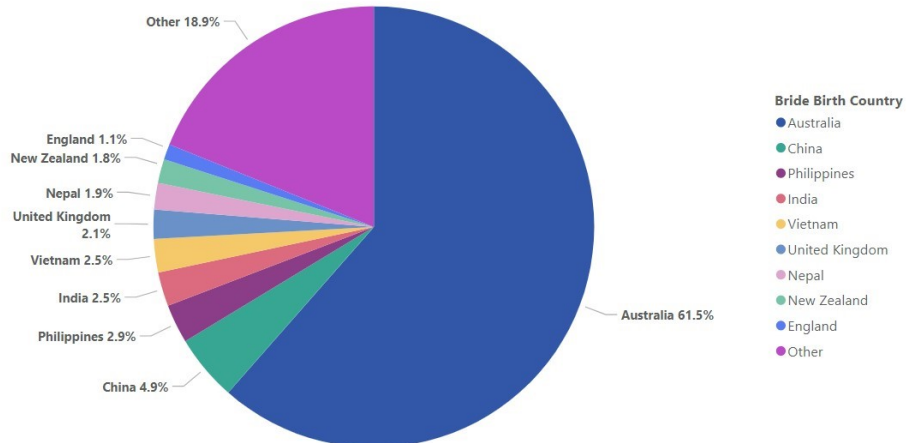
Weddings by Celebrant Type , 2022 - 2023 YTD



Bride Country of Birth, Jan-Jun 2023



Bride Country of Birth, Jan-Jun 2023



Professional Development – 2023



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Marriage Celebrants Portal

The following sets out the professional development requirements for authorised marriage celebrants:

- The *Marriage Act 1961* (paragraph 39G(1)(b)),
- *Marriage Regulations 2017* (section 53) and
- *Marriage (Celebrant Professional Development) Statement 2023*

As a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant, you MUST complete compulsory professional development activities every calendar year (January to December).

These activities will be available for free through MarCel, the Marriage Celebrants [online self-service portal](#).

If you cannot access the portal the MLCS can provide the activities to you by email or hard copy.

Information about professional development obligations can be found on the AG's [website](#).

Compulsory professional development activities must be undertaken between 1st January and 31st December each year and MUST be completed by 31st December each calendar year.

If you do not complete your compulsory professional development activities the MLCS may impose a disciplinary measure, unless you were granted a professional development exemption.

Disciplinary measures may include:

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

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

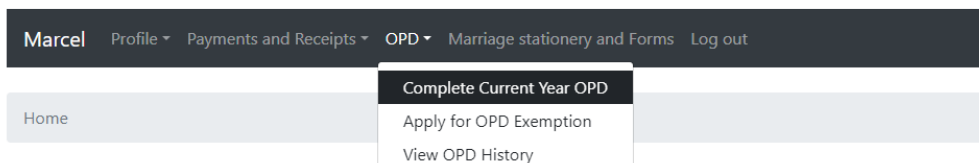
Note: Once you have completed an activity or have been granted an exemption, you will no longer be able to view the activity/activities.

There are no elective activities. However, you can undertake further professional development if you wish to do so but any additional training you undertake will not be counted towards your compulsory professional development activities and will not be carried over to the next calendar year though would presumably enhance your knowledge, skills and experience.

Exemptions from compulsory professional development activities

If you received a Certificate IV in Celebrancy in the 12 months before you registered as a celebrant, you are exempt from professional development for the calendar year of your registration.

MLCS may also exempt you from completing the professional development activities if you are registered towards the end of a calendar year.



You don't have to apply for these exemptions as the MLCS will tell you in your registration email if you are exempt for these reasons but if you don't meet either of these criteria, you must complete your professional development activities or [apply for an exemption](#).

Your 2023 Obligatory Professional Development has two [2] compulsory activities:

Activity 1: Completing the Notice of Intended Marriage – Compulsory – 23AGD001

- As an authorised celebrant it is your responsibility to provide legally correct and professional marriage services. Maintaining a high standard in relation to marriage documentation is central to your role. When marriage paperwork is not completed correctly, it may cause great inconvenience or serious consequences for both couples and the celebrant. This activity outlines the requirements that apply in relation to the Notice of Intended Marriage, and various scenarios celebrants may face.

Activity 2: Offences relevant to marriage celebrants – Compulsory – 23AGD002

- In this activity we will consider the offences under the *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) (the Marriage Act) and some particular offences under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) (the Criminal Code) that celebrants, parties to a marriage, and other persons involved in the marriage ceremony should be aware of, and related matters.

To fulfil your 2023 professional development obligations, you must complete and submit both activities by 31st December 2023.

The questions must be answered in your celebrant portal (or in exceptional circumstances on request by email or hardcopy).

Once you have logged into MarCel, select OPD and then 'Complete Current Year OPD'.

When you open each module, you will be able to download a booklet which you should read before undertaking the OPD.

When you have answered all the questions in the celebrant portal, you may find it beneficial to print your questions and answers. (*continues next page..*)

You cannot submit until all questions are answered and then, when you click 'Submit', you will receive a confirmation message following which the AG's department will be automatically notified that you have completed the activity.

If you do not have email or internet access please contact the Marriage Law and Celebrants Section to make suitable arrangements for completing this activity. Where the department emails or posts a copy of the activity, you must complete and return it to the department before 31 December 2023 to meet your obligations. You should retain a copy of the activities for your records.

Contact details

Marriage Law and Celebrants Section
1 8 0 0 5 5 0 3 4 3
Outside Australia: +61 2 6141 3111
marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au
3-5 National Circuit BARTON ACT 2600

Related links

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

NOIM - OPD INFO.

Pages 1 & 2 of the NOIM are filled with instructions and before you undertake your OPD, you may care to read those instructions. Actually it is a good idea to read them and all of the NOIM regularly.

As always, I won't be giving you the answer to a specific question but you will find the answer to at least one OPD question in this post and gain a greater understanding by conducting further research.

When we go to the NOIM, we find that Questions 8 and 15 on the NOIM, ask about someone's place of birth but they have differing requirements. Q8 requires detail about the party to marriage (PTM) while Q15 refers only to country of birth of a parent.

Q15 appears simple however don't be confused by countries that have changed their official name or status, no longer exist, or present differently depending on what year a passport or birth certificate might have been issued e.g. England or United Kingdom, Serbia or Yugoslavia. When registering the marriage online though, you should find that the country is listed in the dropdown

menu regardless of its present status. If you have been given a Birth Certificate for a party to the marriage, the birth country of each parent is likely to be listed but if using a PTM passport, you may need to rely upon the informant because very few passports have details of the holders' parents.

Q8 relates to the identity of the parties to the marriage (PTM) and so requires greater care.

Parties should be encouraged to produce their evidence of date and place of birth with their NOIM, as this saves time and prevents issues later if forgotten during the excitement however it may be produced at any time before the marriage is solemnised.

A party's date and place of birth should be recorded exactly as it appears on the document produced as evidence.

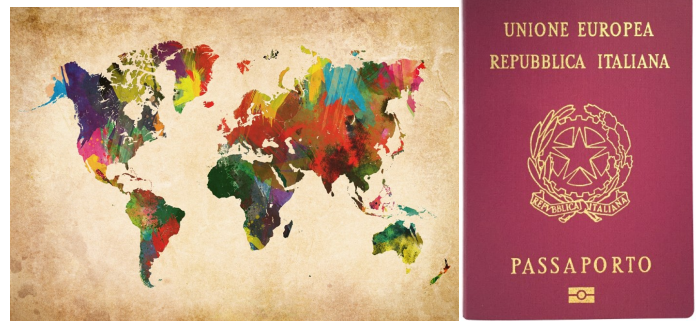
For the parties to the marriage, who were born in Australia, the birthplace includes:

- the city or town
- state or territory

For parties to the marriage who were born outside of Australia, their birthplace will include:

- the city or town,
- the state or province (if applicable) and of course
- the country of birth

All experienced Celebrant will tell you that even if the couple enters data on the NOIM themselves, ALWAYS cross check against the evidence for accuracy.



OPD 2023 TRAINING

WEDNESDAY, 9th AUGUST 2023

at 7pm EST

AMC Members are invited to a free on-line OPD night including a general discussion and education session on the OPD Questions

More information at this link

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/721kceGorz0qHtQIC_ouP...

WHO CAN WITNESS A NOIM?

It is better to ask a question and get an answer that will lead you to research and understanding, rather than not ask the question and continue blindly.

This particular question does not come up in the 2023 OPD but has often come up in forums where it is also perhaps the most often complained about question because this is important but basic knowledge that every celebrant is required to know. Remember that if you accept a NOIM that has not been incorrectly witnessed, the NOIM is 'invalid' and if you then solemnise that marriage, serious consequences can result as the correct notice has not been given and it is an offense to perform a solemnisation of marriage that may be invalid.

The Marriage Act specifies in 'Division 2—Marriages by authorised celebrants/42 Notice to be given and declaration made', just who can actually witness the NOIM:

c) if a party signs the notice in Australia—must be signed in the presence of:

- (i) an authorised celebrant; or
- (ii) a Commissioner for Declarations under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*; or
- (iii) a justice of the peace; or
- (iv) a barrister or solicitor; or
- (v) a medical practitioner; or
- (vi) a member of the Australian Federal Police or the police force of a State or Territory; and

(d) if a party signs the notice outside Australia—must be signed in the presence of:

- (i) an Australian Diplomatic Officer; or
- (ii) an Australian Consular Officer; or
- (iii) a notary public; or
- (iv) an employee of the Commonwealth authorised under paragraph 3(c) of the Consular Fees Act 1955; or
- (v) an employee of the Australian Trade and Investment Commission authorised under paragraph 3(d) of the Consular Fees Act 1955.

This is also explained in the Guidelines under *4.9.1 Who may witness a NOIM signed in Australia?* and *4.9.2 Who may witness a NOIM signed outside Australia?*

In reading the Guidelines and the NOIM itself, you will however notice that a Commissioner for Declarations under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*; is no longer mentioned as an authorised witness. The reason is simply that none have been appointed for some years. Also, if you are in Queensland, please note that a Queensland Commissioner for Declarations is NOT appointed under the Commonwealth *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* and so is NOT an authorised witness.

A frequently asked question is whether a pharmacist or physiotherapist can witness the NOIM and there seems to be some lingering confusion on that point despite it being clear that 'legally qualified medical practitioner' means a person who is registered as a licensed practitioner with the Medical Board of Australia. The category is therefore limited to GPs and specialist doctors but **does NOT include pharmacists or physiotherapists**.

Celebrants should advise parties to the intended marriage that the witness to their signature is required to complete **both** witnessing panels provided, **as well as adding their credentials**.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-

Marketing

FOCUS YOUR MARKETING

When it comes to advertising and marketing it is essential that you identify your ideal client so that you can focus your marketing & advertising, your approach and your presentation, to people you are most likely to connect with.

The shotgun approach of advertising to absolutely everyone does not work and is a waste of time, energy and money. If you spend \$2000 marketing to 50,000 people and secure 10 bookings, all of those 10 bookings are likely to be from the one genre which could have been secured by spending just \$1000 marketing specifically to just that genre. If you know the specifics of the couples that are most likely to book you, you gear up for that and will make your \$count.

McDonald's for instance, advertised directly to children because if the children wanted Maccas, the paying parent and entire family would attend. More recently they had industrialised the look of their stores and have targeted tradies who are now perhaps their biggest market. They will still get the other customers and certainly won't turn them away but by targeting a specific genre in marketing, they build their sales.

If you advertise in *Horses & Hounds*, you'll get people who read that specific magazine and likewise if you advertise in the *Pensioners Press* you'll only hear from over 65s but if you are more interested in the under 25s you might advertise on pictorial social media.

It is about targeting your advertising and style, and so definitely not about restricting clientele.

Look at your Return On Investment (ROI).

Put simply, if you spend \$1000 on advertising, what profit did you make on that?

Did you even make a profit?

Break it down to each area of advertising e.g. wedding directories, google, Bing, FB etc., and then check how much income that particular source of advertising produced. Divide the expenditure by the number of bookings and you get an advertising cost per ceremony. A Celebrant I spoke with, had no idea how much was being spent on advertising until a cost analysis was undertaken. That Celebrant thought a specific figure was being spent and so we googled and found listings in other wedding directories that had been forgotten about but had been paid for as an annual fee with no ROI i.e. not a single booking from those specific forgotten about directories. Forgotten because they were unseen.

What you can't measure, you cannot control.



A Celebrant paid \$400 for a magazine advertisement and received no bookings or even a single call and so that was a \$400 loss while another in a rural area did the same and frequently gets bookings. The key here is to know your market.

Another spent \$1000 on FB advertising and received just two bookings and so after other expenses, broke even. After a 12-month period, bookings continued but the ROI had not changed and so the expenditure had to be revised.

Yet another spent just \$60 on a directory listing that specifically targeted their region and genre and so secured 5 bookings. An excellent ROI.

Two Celebrants attended the same Expo. One walked away with 8 confirmed bookings but the other with just 1. Great initial result for one but not the other as you need a minimum of 3 bookings from an Expo to justify attendance and so other factors came to play. The first Celebrant aligned their presentation to the expected cohort of attendees (under 25s) while the second targeted those over 40 and so may have secured the only couple in that age group in attendance however that Celebrant also took the advantage of getting to meet stall holders from surrounding venues and secured even more bookings later through them and so in the end, both achieved a positive ROI.

According to the *Indeed Career Guide*, knowing your return on investment in marketing can determine your most effective marketing strategy. These are the key areas that a marketing ROI evaluation may offer insight:

- Where to spend your marketing budget
- Keys to pivoting your marketing strategy.
- Which marketing tools to use

Make your advertising count!

HISTORY

The first civil celebrant!

Article by Karen Ambrose.



At the recent conference in Canberra to celebrate 50 years of celebrancy, the attendees were treated to a variety of talks, one of which was by Lois Darcy who

related her experience of being appointed the first civil celebrant in Australia 50 years ago.

It was in the early 1970s that the then Attorney General Lionel Murphy had the idea and foresight to implement a Civil Celebrant programme. Although he had very little support from his colleagues, he went ahead with the appointment of the very first Civil Celebrant in 1973. After meeting Lois Darcy at a social function, Lionel decided she would be the one and simply sent her a certificate through the mail to say she had “been appointed”. The certificate came with no covering letter and no instructions so Lois had to front up to the Registry Office to get some guidance on procedures.

While in her role of school teacher and young mother during the week, Lois spent most week-ends conducting marriages for the princely sum of \$10. This schedule was difficult for Lois to keep up so more and more celebrants subsequently were

appointed until numbers are now in the thousands with 80% of couples being married in civil ceremonies.

Lois indeed captured the audience of grateful conference attendees with her interesting and at times humorous talk and received a standing ovation from those who were spellbound by the petite and eloquent lady who started it all!



The Hague Convention

45 Years ago, back on 14th March 1978, just 5 years after the Civil Celebrants program began that the Hague Convention was signed.

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 men and women 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.

[4b59dd11-e4bd-4b96-9244-513645c7658b.pdf](https://assets.hcch.net/docs/4b59dd11-e4bd-4b96-9244-513645c7658b.pdf)
(hcch.net)

<https://assets.hcch.net/docs/4b59dd11-e4bd-4b96-9244-513645c7658b.pdf>

COORDINATOR COMMENTS



BEST PRACTICE & BEING A PROFESSIONAL

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first Civil Marriage Celebrant being appointed and that special occasion gives us cause to reflect on our profession.

As Celebrants, we are in business and every day make

decisions, give advice and take various actions. We are **professionals** and are regarded by our clients as such when they place great weight upon any advice or information we provide, hence that advice must be correct, accurate and supported by evidence.

There are two types of knowledge, that which we retain and that which we know where to find, but being a professional includes understanding the knowledge.

As celebrants, we are required to follow the [Code Of Practice For Marriage Celebrants](#) but it does not cover all areas of conducting a business or our daily activities as Celebrants where we must not only act within the law, regulations and conventions, but learn from every action discovering what works and what doesn't, what is compliant and what is not, and of course what is accepted by couples venues, vendors and of course the public.

The Code of Practice should not be regarded as goal but as a starting point.

Today, while visiting an international FB page, I was astonished at the comments which ranged from complete guesswork to utter nonsense but presented misinformed opinion as 'fact' with only one celebrant actually posting a link to a source document to offer clarity, yet all in that group regarded themselves as professionals simply because they were allowed to operate despite their unprofessional conduct.

So, what makes us professionals? Is it that we have a qualification, that we undertake annual (OPD) or perhaps regular education, that we are approved by a government authority, that we are members of an association and insured, that we have years of experience in actions, procedures, that we follow a code of conduct or ethics, or is it all of the above and much more?

Professionalism includes following rules & regulations, conventions, policy & procedure,

economics, experience, knowledge, mentor advice and of course adopting best practice in all areas.

Best practice is defined in any dictionary as a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results that are superior to those achieved by other means or because it has become a standard way of doing things, e.g. a standard way of complying with legal or ethical requirements.

It is important in this context, not to confuse the word 'standard' with the word 'common', as an industry standard means to achieve a necessary or higher level while a 'common' action simply requires little effort and so is just a habit and could possibly be wrong or sub-standard.

Here are some statement examples I have encountered that have triggered my thoughts:

1. I did it that way because I had to get it done quickly and didn't want the client to think that I didn't know the answer, (*meaning under pressure, I was unconcerned whether it was right or wrong*).
2. I assumed it was the right way because I think others do it that way. (*meaning I didn't check, don't know, and haven't been caught out*).
3. I wasn't sure, so I asked others on FB instead of looking it up myself (*meaning I couldn't be bothered to check but wanted validation to avoid responsibility for my own actions/inactions and lack of knowledge*).
4. I've been doing it this way for years and have never been told I was wrong. (*unconcerned whether it was right or wrong while ignoring that the absence of evidence to the contrary, is not proof*).
5. I wasn't sure, so told my client that I would check, I then asked others on FB who advised me but I then also checked the Guidelines. (*meaning I was honest and concerned that I got it right – i.e. adopted best practice*).

We all make mistakes, and that includes our advisers and mentors. That is a part of being human but professionalism includes learning from our own mistakes and/or from the mistakes of others. We must question the validity of advice, otherwise we blindly blunder and repeat mistakes, sometimes to great peril or perhaps even at the risk of prosecution and deregistration.

So, do we do as others do because it is quick and easy though perhaps risky; or do we minimise risk and do what is best.

Best practice minimises risk and ensures legality, legitimacy and ethics.

Adopting best practice is the mark of a professional.



See you at the Conference