

October 2023

Volume 2, Issue 5

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



AMC South Coast Celebrants Cheering for each other

An update from your AMC South Coast Coordinator, Lou Szymkow

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



Inside this bumper issue:

- OPD Reminder
- MLCS Emails
- ACMA & Spam
- ACMA & Frequencies
- Why Marriage
- AMC Free education dates
- Knowledge Base
- Statistics
- Celebrant Snapshot
- Movie & Media
- Fun
- Comments

Your responsibilities for obligatory professional development (OPD)



Information taken directly from the The AG webpage which reminds us: You must complete the compulsory professional development activities by 31st December each calendar year.

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

Disciplinary measures may include:

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

There are no elective activities. However, you can undertake further professional development if you wish to do so. 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.

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. MLCS will tell you in your registration email if you are exempt for these reasons.

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

Under section 57 of the Marriage Regulations 2017, Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants can apply for an exemption from their annual Ongoing Professional Development (OPD) requirements.

Exemptions from OPD are only available by applying to the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants. You must be able to satisfy the Registrar that due to exceptional circumstances you will be unable to comply with your requirement to complete OPD in that calendar year. Applications must be made in the calendar year for which the exemption is requested (ie before 31 December) and there is a fee to apply.

- ◇ [Guidelines for exemption from ongoing professional development requirements \[DOCX 81.68 KB\]](#)
- ◇ [Ongoing professional development \(OPD\)](#)
- ◇ [Professional development in 2023](#)
- ◇ [Your responsibilities for professional development](#)
- ◇ [Contact details](#)



COVER PICTURE
Sir Garfield Barwick



**Australian
Communications
and Media Authority**

GET SPAM SMART

As Celebrants, our email addresses are in the public forum and so are often picked up by scammers and spammers. The most common is probably the 'I can fix your SEO' spams. Advertising specialists will tell you that 99% of those emails are from scammers. A real person will usually provide you with a phone number and address while the name used will match the email address and business name.

The following information comes directly from the [ACMA webpage](#). Some may be paraphrased but the content is essentially unchanged.

ACMA is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority that regulates communications and media services in Australia and so contributes to maximising the economic and social benefits of communications infrastructure, services and content for Australia.

Here is what ACMA tells us about Avoiding or reducing spam.

What you should Do:

- ⇒ make informed choices about giving your consent:
 - be wary of competitions – promotions or gift card lotteries (online or in-person) are often designed to obtain your personal information and you may be agreeing to be contacted
 - look out for pre-checked boxes when you buy products or sign up for services – untick them if you can
 - check the terms and conditions to see if you are agreeing to receive marketing
 - check you understand who you are giving consent to and for how long – is it one company, or does it include 'third parties' or 'affiliates' (which could be anyone)?
 - check how long the consent lasts – do you really want to give consent for long periods?
 - check how you can unsubscribe in future if you want to
 - use the unsubscribe facility (such as a link, or instruction to reply STOP) if you are confident the sender has your consent (if they are sending you messages without consent, ACMA want to know – see below)



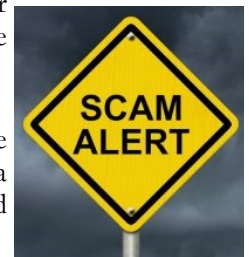
- block the sender – using your email filters or your phone settings
- contact your telco provider for advice on spam filtering or phone blocking.

What you Don't Do:

- tick 'subscribe' boxes (online or in paper forms) without being sure what you are agreeing to
- give your contact details for competitions, surveys or rewards systems without being sure what you are agreeing to – if you're getting something for free, the cost might be your personal information
- click on links in an email or message if you can't verify the sender – it could be a scam.

Spam or scam?

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between spam and a scam. Find out how to spot and stop a [phone scam](#).



Political messages

Spam rules only apply to commercial electronic messages – those that offer, advertise or promote goods or services.

An email or SMS seeking to influence your vote or opinion is rarely covered by these rules – they do not need your consent to send it, and do not need to include an unsubscribe.

This may include messages sent during local, state and territory or federal elections, as well as those sent in the lead-up to a referendum or plebiscite.

Find out more about the [regulation of bulk messages](#) under electoral laws.

Complain or forward spam to the ACMA

There are rules that marketers must follow before they can send you marketing messages.

If you think someone has broken the spam rules, you can [complain to ACMA](#).

You can also forward spam to ACMA. This is not a complaint. It is a quick way to send ACMA a copy of the message you have received to inform the ACMA compliance activities. When you forward spam to ACMA, please do not edit the





Australian Communications and Media Authority

message or change the subject line. You can:

- forward SMS spam to 0429 999 888. Standard message charges apply
- forward email spam to report@submit.spam.acma.gov.au.

Before submitting a spam report, you may wish to read the ACMA [privacy policy](#) to find out how ACMA use the personal information you provide.

If you receive unwanted telemarketing calls, get on the [Do Not Call Register](#) – it’s quick, free and easy.

What ACMA can and can’t do

- ACMA educate consumers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities under spam laws. But ACMA can’t give legal advice.
- ACMA take complaints and reports from people who think a business has broken the rules. ACMA can’t provide you with outcomes for individual complaints. Rather, ACMA use the information you provide to inform the ACMA education, compliance and enforcement work.
- The more serious or systemic an issue appears, the more likely ACMA are to take compliance action or to investigate.
- If a business breaks the rules, ACMA can take enforcement action. Read more about [actions ACMA take](#).
- ACMA can’t block messages sent to your phone or email address.

Scams, spam and telemarketing

- ⇒ [Phone scams](#)
- ⇒ [What is spam?](#)
- ⇒ [Dealing with spam](#)
- ⇒ [Say no to telemarketers](#)

WIRELESS MICROPHONES



ACMA is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority that regulates communications and media services in Australia and so contributes to maximising the economic and social benefits of communications infrastructure, services and content for Australia.

The following information comes directly from the [ACMA webpage](#). Some may be paraphrased but the content is essentially unchanged.



If you use a wireless microphone you need to use the right frequency.

You will find on the ACMA webpage:

- [Do not use the wrong frequency](#)
- [Use the right frequency](#)
- [Your responsibilities](#)
- [The rules for using wireless microphones](#)

Do not use the wrong frequency

If your wireless microphone is able to operate in the 520 to 694 MHz frequency band, you need to check for an available channel in your area by using the [Channel Finder](#).

This frequency band is used for TV broadcasting services across Australia and if you don't use the right frequency for your area you may interfere with TV reception.

Use the right frequency

You should use your wireless microphone only at the right frequency for your area if operating in the frequency ranges of 520 to 694 MHz.

Frequency range (MHz)	Devices and services
520 to 694	Television broadcasting services are the main users of this range. Wireless audio transmitters should only use the unused frequencies in this range. Use ACMA's Channel Finder to find available frequencies in your area. Wireless microphones can use frequencies 520 to 526 MHz in all areas.
1785 to 1800	This frequency range is only for wireless microphone and other audio transmitter use. This frequency range is available in all areas.
174 to 230	This frequency range is available in many regional and remote areas. Use ACMA's Channel Finder to see if these frequencies are available in your area.
Any transmitter: 915 to 928 2400 to 2483.5 5725 to 5875	A wide variety of devices including wi-fi use these frequency ranges. Wireless microphones and audio transmitters can also use these frequencies.
88 to 108	The 88 to 108 MHz frequency range is only for wireless audio transmitters and auditory assistance transmitters.

You can no longer use wireless microphones in the frequency range of 694 to 820 MHz.

There is a group of frequency ranges for wireless audio applications such as wireless intercoms, headsets in fast food outlets, hearing aids and toy microphones. Details can be found in items 24-31 in Schedule 1 of the [Low Interference Potential Devices \(LIPD\) class licence](#).

Wireless microphones can also operate in the frequency ranges listed in the items 1 to 23A of the Schedule 1 of the [Low Interference Potential Devices \(LIPD\) class licence](#).

The LIPD class licence authorises the use of wireless microphones within certain frequency bands but the lower limit is always excluded. You can operate wireless microphones from 915 to 928 MHz band, but not at 915 MHz.

There is also a group of frequency ranges from 10 to 400 MHz that wireless audio applications have used. This includes:

- wireless intercoms
- headsets in fast food outlets
- hearing aids
- toy microphones

Limited equipment is available on the market that could be suitable for such niche applications. You can find details of these ranges in items 1–21 in Schedule 1 of the [LIPD class licence](#).

Your responsibilities

You should use your wireless microphone on the right frequency for your location. If your device is using an unauthorised frequency, you should try to retune it or get help to fix the problem.

Be careful when you buy wireless microphones from overseas sellers as other countries use different frequency ranges for these devices.

You can download ACMA's infographic about [how to spot a dodgy device](#).

Use ACMA's [Channel Finder](#) to find which frequency you should be using in your area.

The rules for using wireless microphones

You don't need to pay or apply for a licence as your wireless microphone is authorised to operate under the [LIPD class licence](#). You must comply with the conditions of the LIPD class licence.

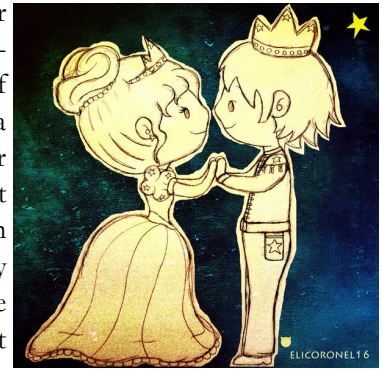
We don't manage the use of each device so it's up to you to set your wireless microphone to the correct frequency and deal with any interference problems.

We may investigate cases of ongoing interference or serious misuse of wireless microphones. There are penalties if you deliberately break the rules or behave in a way that puts others at risk.

There is more information on the rules for using wireless microphones in the [LIPD class licence](#).

A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE IS MORE THAN A PIECE OF PAPER

I wrote this article for other Celebrants (I moderate a couple of FB pages and write a newsletter for Celebrants) however it is valuable information that can impact to any couple who are together but not married.



Many couples have told me of how marriage has strengthened & enhanced their relationship and how wonderful it feels to be married. They experience confidence and security in knowing that the partnership is real, permanent and loving.

When my wife and I married over 45 years ago, I think we were both surprised at just how beautiful it was to step forward knowing that the joy we brought to each other would be there forever

Some couples who have lived together for years without marriage have not realised that the legal rights for a couple in a defacto relationship are not the same as for a married couple, especially if there is no Will or Medical Directive. When they hear that if you have been together for two years, you have equal rights to that of a married couple they don't always realise that in reality it may not be as simple. With a marriage, you are immediately the next-of-kin, and with that, you are given protection under the law with regards to property, assets, inheritance, insurances, medical care and so much more.

If not married, you may not be accepted as the 'next of kin' in an emergency situation even if you have been together for many years.



I will give you some hypothetical examples based on real events (names changed):

- i) John who was estranged from his family, and Mary had postponed their marriage though they had four teenage children. John got sick but Mary discovered that any member John's extended family with whom there was no communication, and not Mary, was legally the next of kin able to make medical decisions about John's care while Mary could even be removed entirely from the situation. After John's death, Mary had to sue for her share of the estate.

- ii) A couple was in a defacto relationship for many years when John suddenly died without having specified Mary on insurances and so Mary had to go through a protracted & expensive legal battle to prove entitlement to the estate which included a home, superannuation, and life insurances.
- iii) John & Jane married young but they separated within a few months with no assets. They both moved on but didn't bother filing for divorce. Years later, John fell in love with Mary and planning a future together, bought a house, but John suddenly died with no Will and so Jane, the first partner long forgotten about, was still the legal spouse and entitled to claim his entire estate and could even control his funeral.
- iv) John's parents threw him out of the family home at 14 when he told his parents that he was gay. John had no contact with his parents but later in life, he found Brian and they were together for almost 20 years. They never married though they bought a house together making it their home and their lives were totally intertwined. John suddenly took ill. Fearing the worst, Brian phoned John's parents from the ICU and they rushed to John's side where they took over as 'next of kin'. They threw Brian out and at John's funeral, didn't even acknowledge him. As there was no Will, John's estate was automatically granted to his next of kin (his parents) and the parents immediately took possession of all of John's assets, including his share of the home he and Brian had built. A distraught and grieving Brian had to sue for his share of the estate.
- v) John and Mary and their baby were in a car accident. Mary and John could each make medical decisions about their baby as parents but not of each other as they were not next of kin to each other.



So the suggestion is:

1. Talk to your partner about the future
2. If you plan to be together forever, get married. It is worth it.
3. Make a Will, whether you marry or not, noting that when you marry, it voids your previous Will and so you should make a new one.
4. If not married but together and you want your partner to make medical decisions in an emergency and not your ex-partner or parents, see a solicitor to create an Advanced Care Directive
5. Live happily ever after

AMC FREE ONLINE EDUCATION SESSIONS

Did you miss the AMC Conference but still want more UpToDate education on a range of relevant topics?

AMC members should keep an eye out for emails, FB posts and event listing on the AMC webpage. So that you can join the fantastic interactive education sessions broadcast via Zoom.

These are the dates for upcoming education sessions

- ◆ Oct 11, 2023 07:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
- ◆ Nov 8, 2023 07:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
- ◆ Dec 13, 2023 07:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
- ◆ Jan 10, 2024 07:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
- ◆ Feb 14, 2024 07:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney



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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.

SURPRISE WEDDINGS & COERCION

By Lou Szymkow

Surprise weddings involve one of the parties to the marriage being 'surprised', either at or shortly before the ceremony.

The most popular scenario involves one member of a couple wishing to 'surprise' the other party by organising the marriage without

their knowledge and then presenting them with the complete ceremony as a romantic gesture.

Whilst the Guidelines suggest that it is not a 'surprise wedding' if both parties have signed the Notice of Intended Marriage (NOIM) and only the date of the wedding or event is the surprise component. we must put that in context because Authorised Celebrants must not participate in surprise ceremonies as consent may be at issue.

No person can be put under pressure to enter into a marriage and the pressures imposed by a 'surprise' wedding could lead to a void marriage due to a lack of real consent.

Authorised celebrants should not accept a NOIM signed by only one party to facilitate a surprise wedding. Authorised celebrants should contact the party who has not signed the NOIM to confirm that they are aware of the intended marriage.

If either party does not give 'real consent' to marriage, the Federal Court may determine that the marriage to be void and of course the authorised celebrant may be called to give evidence in court as to the consent of the parties.

If the marriage is voided, the authorised celebrant may have committed an offence under section 100 of the Marriage Act where solemnising a marriage, if the person has reason to believe that there is a legal impediment to the marriage or if the person has reason to believe the marriage would be void carries a penalty of Imprisonment for 6 months or 5 penalty units.



Where a party has previously consented to marriage but has time to further consider that choice, there may be a change of mind. In some instances, a party may even sign a NOIM without intending to proceed to marriage.

Note that even free consent can be withdrawn at any time before solemnisation.

If a party is coerced into marriage where the victim does not or cannot freely and fully consent to the marriage because of the use of that coercion, threat or deception, an offence has occurred.

'Coercion, threat or deception' includes a broad range of physical and non-physical conduct that may be used by a person against the victim, or another person, to cause the victim to enter into a marriage.

There are three types of forced marriages under the Criminal Code.

A marriage is a forced marriage if:

- **'Coercion'**: a person (the victim) enters into the marriage without freely and fully consenting because of the use of coercion, threat or deception, **'Coercion'** means coercing another person to do something by use of force, duress, detention, psychological oppression, abuse of power, and taking advantage of a person's vulnerability. (Section 270.1A of the Criminal Code.)

1. **'Deception'**: the victim entered into the marriage without freely and fully consenting because the victim was incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony, **'Deception'** is misleading a person as to fact or as to law, by words or other conduct. (Sections 270.1A and 271.1 of the Criminal Code)

- **'threat'**: at the time of the marriage, either party to the marriage was under 16 years of age (Section 270.7A(1) of the Criminal Code). Note that the marriage of persons under 16 years of age is never permitted by the Marriage Act. A **'threat'** means a threat of coercion (e.g. a threat that force will be used against the victim unless they enter the marriage), a threat to cause a person's deportation or removal from Australia or a threat of any other detrimental action (unless there are reasonable grounds for the threat in connection with the provision of labour or services) (Section 270.1A of the Criminal Code).

Section 270.7B of the Criminal Code includes two offences relating to forced marriage:

1. engaging in conduct that causes another person to enter into a forced marriage, and
2. being a party to a forced marriage (this offence does not apply to the victim of a forced marriage).

Both offences have penalties of seven years

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imprisonment or nine years imprisonment in the case of an aggravated offence.

An authorised celebrant should thoroughly document any conversations they have to assess a person's consent to

marry. This means if any questions on validity of the consent arise, at a later date, the celebrant has a record of his or her decision making process.

This is important because celebrants may be called upon to give evidence in court as to the consent of the parties. It is also useful in the event that your involvement in a marriage, that is later challenged, needs to be defended.

Surprise weddings raise an important and unavoidable issue in relation to the legality of the marriage. It is best described as placing undue pressure on the 'surprised' person to agree to the arrangement. Even if there is evidence that the person would previously have agreed to a marriage proposal, their consent must not be assumed.

No person can be put under pressure to enter into a marriage and the pressures imposed by a 'surprise' wedding could lead to a void marriage due to a lack of real consent.

Generally, the NOIM should be signed by both parties when it is provided to their authorised celebrant. An authorised celebrant may accept a NOIM with the signature of one party where the signature of the other party cannot conveniently be obtained at the time. The intention of this provision is to enable a couple to give notice of their intended marriage with only one party signing the NOIM if the other is unable to sign at the time because of an unavoidable absence.

Authorised celebrants should not accept a NOIM signed by only one party to facilitate a surprise wedding. Authorised celebrants should contact the party who has not signed the NOIM to confirm that they are aware of the intended marriage.

If a person approaches an authorised celebrant with a request for a 'surprise' marriage ceremony, the authorised celebrant should advise the person:

- the minimum requirements for a legal marriage, such as giving one month's notice for the NOIM and the need for 'real consent', and
- that they will contact the other party to ensure that they are aware that the celebrant has received the NOIM.

Participation by any Commonwealth registered marriage celebrant in a surprise marriage ceremony may be an offence and could result in prosecution or a disciplinary measure being imposed.

Triggers or signs that could suggest a person does not understand the nature or effect of marriage could include the person:

- making inconsistent statements



- displaying difficulty in understanding
- being confused about times or places
- having noticeable problems with memory
- speaking nonsensically
- remaining silent or otherwise not communicating
- constantly interrupting
- displaying emotions that are excessive or inappropriate for the circumstances.

The following questions may assist an authorised celebrant to identify situations where a person may not understand the nature or effect of the marriage:

- Is there any sign that a party does not have capacity to make decisions in other areas of their life? For example, is a party subject to a g u a r d i a n s h i p o r d e r? Note that a guardianship order is not conclusive evidence that a person lacks capacity to understand the nature and effect of marriage. It may simply be a trigger for further assessment.
- Does one of the parties seem vague or unclear about the purpose of the meeting with the authorised celebrant?
- Is the party able to give any information about themselves and why they want to be married?

GUIDELINES 11.1.4 If you are asked to solemnise a surprise wedding

If a person approaches a celebrant with a request for a 'surprise' wedding, the celebrant should:

- advise the person of the minimum requirements for a marriage (such as giving one month's notice for the NOIM) and refuse to solemnise the marriage,
- explain to the person why surprise weddings are potentially invalid (that is because they may raise issues of consent), and
- advise the BDM in the relevant state or territory in case marriage documents are submitted.

Participation by any Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant in a surprise ceremony may result in disciplinary measures being imposed.

STATISTICS

This article taken from the MLCS and ABS, provides details of marriages in 2021, with comparisons made to 2020, the first year of the pandemic, and 2019 as the last pre-pandemic year. Comparisons are also made with an average of 2015-2019 marriage counts to highlight changes in seasonal patterns.

These are the most recent marriage-related statistics with comment published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics of interest. [Marriages and Divorces, Australia, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/australia-2021-australian-bureau-of-statistics)

- There were 89,164 couples who married in 2021, well below pre-pandemic marriage numbers.
- Marriages in New South Wales and Victoria were down 31.0% and 34.6% respectively when compared with 2019.
- There were 56,244 divorces granted in 2021.

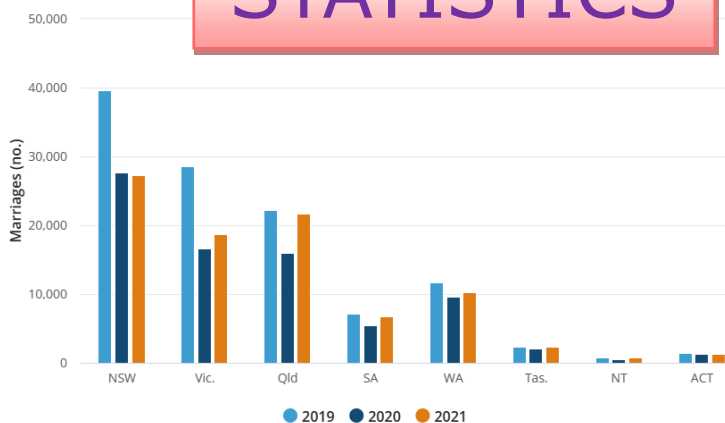
That number of 89,164 marriages registered in Australia in 2021, is well below pre-pandemic numbers but more than the historic low (78,989) recorded in 2020.

Public health orders including lockdowns, size and density limits on gatherings, mask mandates, and restrictions on social activities such as singing and dancing would have all impacted on couples' marriage plans, especially during the Delta wave from June 2021 onwards.

In 2021:

- There were 89,164 marriages registered which was 12.9% higher than in 2020 (78,989), but still 21.7% lower than 2019 (113,815).
- The crude marriage rate was 3.5 per 1,000 people, compared with 3.1 in 2020, and 4.5 in 2019.

This shows us that in 2021, the highest annual proportion of marriages performed by civil celebrants was recorded, at 80.7% showing continuing growth. If we look back 20 years it was only 53.1%.



a. Marriages data are based on the state or territory of registration rather than usual residence. See 'Considerations when interpreting data' in [Methodology](#) for more information.

Median age at marriage in 2021:

- for males it was 32.1 years.
- for females it was 30.5 years.
- 80.7% of marriages were officiated by a civil celebrant, similar to the 80.3% officiated by civil celebrants in 2019 and 2020.

These stats are particularly interesting given that wedding directories often tell you that their surveys given the majority age as being under 25. That can be interpreted to show that under 25s will go to expos and directories but that may not be consistent with marriages overall.

Same-sex marriages

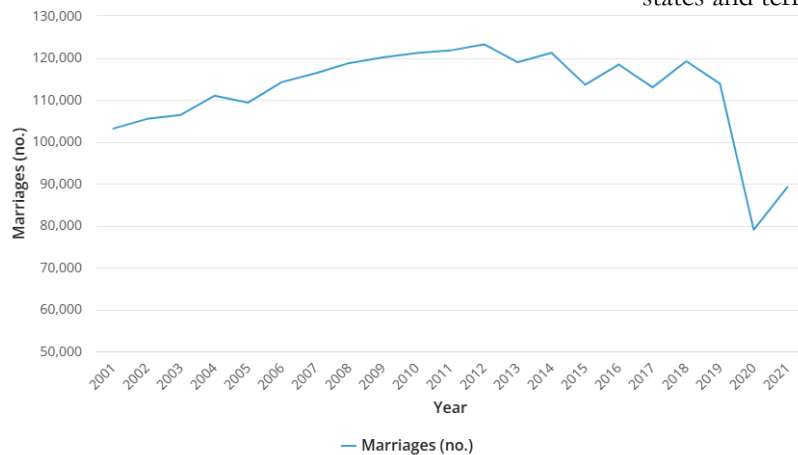
In 2021 there were 2,842 same-sex marriages registered, a slight decrease of 60 (2.1%) compared with 2020. Same-sex marriages represented 3.2% of all marriages registered in Australia in 2021.

Although there have been fewer same-sex marriages every year since their introduction at the end of 2017, the largest decrease occurred between 2019 and 2020 at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (with 2,605 fewer marriages in 2020 compared with 2019).

Same-sex marriages as a proportion of all marriages have decreased each year since their introduction, accounting for 3.2% in 2021 compared with 5.5% in 2018.

In 2021, more female same-sex couples married (1,771) than male same-sex couples (1,072). This was the case across all states and territories.

Number of marriages registered in Australia, 2001 to 2021



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Under the Act, if you don't complete your OPD the MLCS has no choice but to impose disciplinary action just as failing to pay your renewal by the due date, will result in cancellation of your registration

RETIREMENT/RESIGNATION or DEREGISTRATION

Retirement or Resignation from being a Marriage Celebrant has a process that must be followed and ends in deregistration but there are other actions or inactions that can result in deregistration.

This article covers both options and is paraphrased directly from the AG website, Guidelines, and registration invoice.

Failing to complete the OPD by 31/12/2023 or failing to pay the annual registration fee for 1/7/2023 to 30/6/2024 can result in disciplinary action including 'deregistration'. Failure to pay is an automatic deregistration from 30/6/2023 as the MLCS has no discretion to extend registration however, that is of course very different from retirement/resignation.

You are liable to pay a celebrant registration charge of \$170.00 for the financial year 2023-2024 (section 39FA of the Act). The celebrant registration charge is payable unless you are granted an exemption from the liability to pay the charge for this financial year. Refunds are not available in the event you are no longer registered during the year.

The Charge Payment Day is 60 days from the date of issue of the invoice and so for most 06/11/2023 is the final deadline for payment.

Under the legislation, payments cannot be accepted after the due date.

The consequence of non-payment by the Charge Payment Day is that you will be deregistered as a marriage celebrant under section 39FB of the Act. You will receive a notice of intention to deregister you by removing you from the register of marriage celebrants 21 days after the date of the notice, unless exceptional circumstances exist. Exceptional circumstances will generally arise only where a celebrant has a wedding booked imminently in a very remote location and there is no other celebrant available.

Please note that the celebrant registration charge is a debt due to the Commonwealth and may be recovered by action in a court of competent jurisdiction.

If you are intending to retire and choose to not pay

your registration for the period of 1/7/2023 to 30/6/2024, you should not advertise or perform any ceremonies as a Commonwealth Registered Marriage Celebrant after 30/6/2023 because your registration will end on 30/6/2023 and you may be committing an offence. You could apply for an exemption from the fee.

Applying for an exemption

You may apply for an exemption from liability to pay the 2023-2024 celebrant registration charge under section 48 of the Regulations. There are limited circumstances in which an exemption from the celebrant registration charge may be granted. Guidelines on eligibility requirements are contained on the department's website:

<https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/marriage/resources-marriage-celebrants/costs-commonwealth-registered-marriage-celebrants>

All exemption applications attract a non-refundable \$30 administration fee and applications must be submitted, with payment, no later than 21 days after the day on which the notice is sent. Applications received without payment, or after the 21 day deadline will not be accepted.

You should contact the Marriage Law & Celebrants Section as soon as possible on 1800 550 343 if you have any concerns regarding the payment of your invoice or applying for an exemption.

Guidelines 13.3 - DISCIPLINARY MEASURES tells the department that the Registrar can only take disciplinary measures against a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant if satisfied of one of the following circumstances:

- the celebrant is no longer entitled to be registered.
- the celebrant has not complied with an obligation under section 39G of the Marriage Act
- the celebrant's performance was determined to be not satisfactory as a result of a performance review under section 39H of the Marriage Act
- after considering a complaint made against the marriage celebrant the Registrar considers it appropriate to take disciplinary measures
- the marriage celebrant's application for registration was known by the marriage celebrant to be false or misleading in a material particular, or
- the marriage celebrant's notice requesting to be identified as a religious marriage celebrant was known by the marriage celebrant to be false or misleading in a material particular.

The Registrar may take the following disciplinary action:

- a written caution

FIND RESOURCES ON OUR AMC WEBPAGE

<https://marriagecelebrants.org.au/member/resources/>

- the requirement to undertake particular professional development activities
- suspension for up to six months, or
- deregistration.

A celebrant who is deregistered or has their registration suspended has a right of review to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

If however you are choosing to **RETIRE OR RESIGN FROM THE ROLE OF COMMONWEALTH-REGISTERED MARRIAGE CELEBRANT**, Guidelines 13.4 tells the department that to retire as a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant, celebrants must advise the department in writing (see the template on the 'Managing your registration' webpage) that they wish to resign.

<https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/marriage/resources-marriage-celebrants/manage-your-registration#resign>

Celebrants should quote their marriage celebrant authorisation number.

Once this information is received from a celebrant, the department will start the process to revoke their authorisation. Once the process has been completed, the celebrant will be sent a letter advising that their authorisation has been revoked, outlining record-keeping obligations and what to do with any unused marriage forms. Celebrants should advise the department of any future ceremonies they intend to perform to ensure their revocation is not processed prior to these dates.

You can ask the department to remove you from the register of marriage celebrants if you are retiring, resigning or becoming a minister of religion.

You can also tell the department if a family member who was a marriage celebrant has passed away. Requests must be in writing (email the department) or you can resign by using the self-service portal.

MLCS will tell you in writing when the department has processed your request.

After MLCS processes your request, you cannot solemnise marriages in Australia anymore and your registration is not able to be reinstated.

KEEP YOUR RECORDS

When you retire as a celebrant, any Form 15 marriage certificates must be:

- destroyed
- given or sold to another authorised marriage celebrant

They cannot be given to someone who is not an authorised marriage celebrant.

If you give or sell them to another authorised marriage celebrant, you should write:

- the authorised marriage celebrant's name
- the number of each Form 15 you gave them

You should also write the number of each Form 15 that you destroy and make a note that it was destroyed.

After you stop being a marriage celebrant, you must keep these records for 6 years:

- record of use form for Form 15 certificates

- completed official certificates of marriage, unless you are a minister of religion

Ministers of religion need to add their official certificates of marriage to either the:

- parish or district where the marriage was performed
- records of the church where the marriage happened
- records of the religious body or organisation

<https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/notice-intention-remove-name-person-register>

<https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Marriage/marriagecelebrants/Pages/Managing-your-registration.aspx>



AUSTRALIAN
MARRIAGE
CELEBRANTS

The AMC committee are all volunteer Celebrants who freely offer their time and energy. It is a compliment to their character that they paid their own accommodation & entry to the AMC Conference and unlike some other associations are not paid any sort of stipend but are of course reimbursed expenses when they bother to claim

Office Bearers

- **President & National Regional Co-ordinator:** Annemarie McDonell
- **Vice President/Education Officer/Regional Coordinator:** Kelly Lawson
- **Treasurer:** Lesley Fazzolari
- **Secretary/Regional Coordinator:** Karyn Bridge
- **Policies Officer:** Kathleen Dodd

General Committee:

- **Conference Coordinator:** Kamal Al Saliby
- **Rep-AG Govt Liaison Officer:** Brian Brennan
- **Contact Liaison/Regional Coordinator:** Paul Guy
- **Newsletter Editor:** Jacqueline LeGrand
- **Social Media Marketing Officer/Regional Coordinator:** Tanya McDonald
- **Conference Coordinator/Regional Coordinator:** Leanne McKay

There is also a huge list of Regional Coordinators including of course the Author/Editor of this newsletter.

You can find out more about the committee at:

<https://marriagecelebrants.org.au/about-us/executive-committee/>



MLCS EMAILS

Don't miss MLCS emails. This article taken from the MLCS Autumn 2023 Newsletter, and it tells us how to make sure MLCS emails don't get lost in your junk mail folder.

MLCS strongly recommends you adjust your settings in your email to always direct email from marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au to your inbox. It is common for email from organisations to be directed to junk mail and if you do not check your junk mail folder regularly, you may miss important reminders which could lead to you being non-compliant with your obligations, or deregistered for non-payment of your annual registration fee. MLCS cannot assist you with IT support for your email settings.

For general guidance with changing your email settings for the commonest email applications, see the links below:

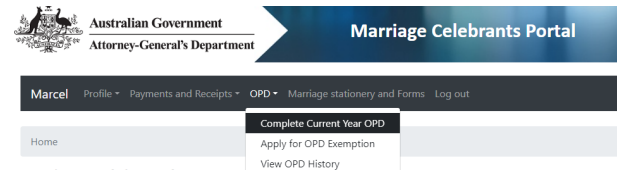
- ◊ [Mail goes to the Junk folder by mistake - Microsoft Support](#)
- ◊ [Change Junk Mail settings in Mail on Mac – Apple Support \(AU\)](#)
- ◊ [Add, move, or import contacts - Computer - Contacts Help \(google.com\)](#)

Opt-in to SMS

Make sure you receive MLCS SMS reminders and notifications. For those who would value a quick reminder or notification in relation to important aspects of the Marriage Celebrants Program, we have launched SMS arrangements.

Participation in these arrangements is not automatic. You will need to opt-in and consent to receiving SMS messages. You can do so via:

- the self-service portal or
- by writing to us at marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au and providing the following consent: I acknowledge and consent that for the purposes of being provided with SMS notifications to manage my involvement in the [Marriage Celebrants Program](#), including but not limited to, being reminded of invoices and relevant deadlines, such as for completing professional development or other important communications (such as changes to forms, guidelines, legislation etc.), my mobile contact number may be provided to a third party contracted service provider to deliver that notification.



You can opt-out at any time. MLCS SMS alpha-tag (identification) is MLCS and it will be used for all messages. MLCS SMS messages are intended to be quick alerts or reminders only. You should not respond to us via SMS. MLCS will not ask you to access any links via SMS and we will never ask you to provide personal information via SMS. You can opt-out at any time.

MLCS SMS alpha-tag (identification) is MLCS and it will be used for all messages. MLCS SMS messages are intended to be quick alerts or reminders only. You should not respond to us via SMS. MLCS will not ask you to access any links via SMS and MLCS will never ask you to provide personal information via SMS.

To opt-in via the [self-service portal](#), just follow the steps in our '[How to...](#)' on the website.

The team at MLCS is available to help you with any questions you have about updating your details.

NEXT MLCS MEETING



The next MLCS meeting has been postponed to December 2023. If you would like any matters raised, notify the AMC executive with details.

Remote Witnessing of the NOIM

The Coronavirus Economic Response Package (Modifications—Statutory Declarations and Notices of Intention to Marry) Determination 2021 was extended to 31 December 2023.

This allows for an authorised witness to remotely witness the signing of the NOIM by parties in Australia.

AMC is aware that many Celebrants wish to be made permanent.

IMPORTANT:

a party overseas is required to have the signing of the NOIM witnessed by an overseas authorised witness e.g. a notary public. A celebrant cannot witness the signing of the NOIM outside Australia



My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3

Review by Lyndal Johnston JP, The Travelling Celebrant (Newcastle /Lake Macquarie/Hunter)

As a lover from the get go of this franchise, the original 2002 starter was a movie I adored and related to as a 30 something newlywed with a large, very multicultural, [dysfunctional](#) and loud family. The 2016 release of MBFGW2, at that stage in my life was again relatable and funny though it only feels like yesterday that it was at the movies!

The brilliant minds of Nia Vardalos and Rita Wilson have yet again produced a relevant, almost timeline appropriate and joyful celebration of life on the big screen with the Portakolos-Miller family on a mission to the Greek Islands to fulfil the wishes of family patriarch Gus after his passing.

As the family boards a plane, we discover that the last 18 months or so have not been kind to the Portakolos family. The season has changed as sometimes it does in a short amount of time, and they are all needing to find their way. but also discover that on arrival at Gus's home village, that is also floundering and in need of a boost of life. And who better that to boost life and start the party than this amazing and multifaceted family?

We find the family somewhat at a loss and floundering in a pool of grief that no amount of Windex can fix, dealing with the demise and decline of aging parents. Dementia is

Media Review

sensitively and beautifully dealt with and gently cajoles us into seeing the beauty as well as humour in what is a triggering topic. Lainie Kazan yet again does an amazing and hilarious portrayal of family [matriarch](#), Maria Portokalos.

This franchise from the start has been about life, and the journey and finding your way. In this third instalment this reviewer finds this has been done beautifully with sensitivity including dementia, the ageing process, passing of parents, growth in the children of those parents and the acceptance that we all eventually face down those "adulting issues"; the absolute need when you are a couple or a team that you totally need time-out at times, to reconnect, review and fall in love all over again. It reminds us that young love is and always will be turbulent, messy and magical! And that the Greek Islands are an amazing backdrop – for ANYTHING. (frantically researching tickets and tours)

This chapter, like the others, shows us the rich nature of a multicultural celebration, and the acceptance of rituals from other cultures and the mingling of this, that can only serve to enhance the love stories we create in our lives. It also effectively addresses the significance of the aftermath of the cremation of a loved one, and a way of dealing with the ashes in a manner that enhances the growth of this particular family unit and should leave us looking to our own in how we react to these situations in life.

Above all this, movie from a celebrant perspective – celebrates everything Life, Love and The Passing of those we love.

All in all – a great ride, and it does set us up for the next instalment should they make another, but it also completes the tale of this beautiful, loud, funny and colourful family. I'd almost forgotten about Aunt Voula and the neck pull! – Smile ladies and pull back that neck hard!



THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

Celebrant Profile Snapshot. This is just to capture a snapshot in this 50th year. The stories of current and past celebrants are invited. This is not limited to AMC Members but is just a snapshot in time so that in another 25 or 50 years, Celebrants will be able to look back and to read what it was like to be a celebrant in 2023.

MANDI GILL

When Mandi Gill, a business owner and director of her own company, loves weddings and so when her daughter was married, she was reminded her own Civil Ceremony and was inspired by the celebrant Jacqua, to pursue the profession herself, especially remembering back to her own wedding

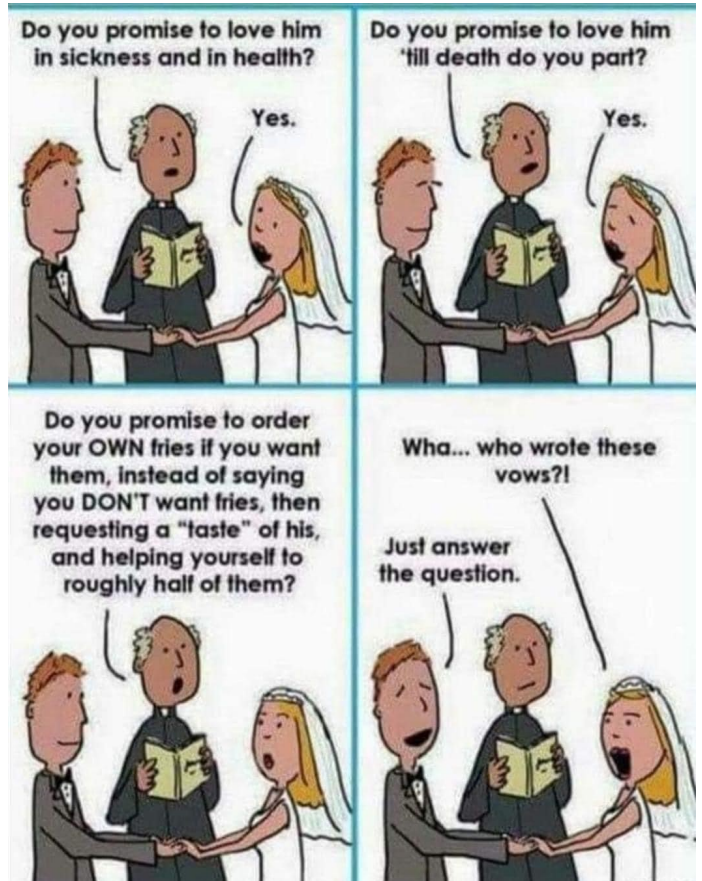
Over a 12 month period, she completed her online Certificate IV in celebrancy and lodged her application with the AG's office to be authorised after a three month wait, on 20th May 2021.

Mentored by Allegra, she describes her style as "warm, fun and sincere".

Bringing her business skills into her new field, Mandi has great organisation, a fun attitude, and is unflappable in a crisis. Her special tool is her smile which helps her form great relationship with her couples as she helps them as much as possible, though is also sometimes assisted her husband as a roadie. Initially, she said, she had to overcome nerves but as bookings came in, she gained more confidence and achieved the #2 Celebrant position in the Shoalhaven ABIA Awards 2013.



She uses Google, social media and a great website to procure bookings and already has completed over 80 wedding. She enjoys ceremonies that include kids and animals as they add fun to the event. She continues to enjoy absolutely every ceremony, especially if she has developed a really good repour with the couple. She doesn't see herself as a mentor to other celebrants at this timer but has worked closely with another celebrant who is also somewhat new.



She is currently a member of the AMC and the Celebrant Society but was also a member of Celebrant Institute for a time. She also attended the Celebrant Society conference in Bali in 2023.

Like other Celebrants in coastal and rural regions, she would love to keep the Covid initiative of signing & lodging of the NOIM via audio-visual links, beyond December 2023.

Mandi looks forward to many more weddings and says with her usual smile "I love what I do"



THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

Celebrant Profile Snapshot. This is just to capture a snapshot in this 50th year. The stories of current and past celebrants are invited. This is not limited to AMC Members but is just a snapshot in time so that in another 25 or 50 years, Celebrants will be able to look back and to read what it was like to be a celebrant in 2023.



PHIL TIMBRELL

Phil Timbrell retired from the role of General Manager, Engineering, for an international manufacturing company before he gained his A number in 2015.

After conducting a number of ceremonies around Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Hunter, he finally decided to focus his energy on his own

locality, the beautiful Blue Mountains NSW and has even been featured in several YouTube videos promoting the Blue Mountains and elopement style weddings.

He has developed a reputation as a unique, personable, witty and very professional Celebrant offering very enjoyable ceremonies in a unique nature filled environment.

His favourite weddings are those on cliff tops with the breathtaking views that only the mountains can offer, and maybe followed by a glass of champers to celebrate with the lucky couples.

He of course enjoys every ceremony and has now performed hundreds though laughs over a particular back yard wedding when the bride arrived and was ready to process but the groom was still in the shower. He joined a celebrancy association early, but then decided to try out dual membership along with AMC which is where he found his comfort zone. He resigned from the other association and is now Regional coordinator for *AMC Sydney West and Blue Mountains* where he has again excelled running excellent informative, enjoyable, welcoming meetings. Phil presented the zoom educational session on October 11 on how to reduce the probability of a PA issue at your next ceremony.

The next *AMC Sydney West and Blue Mountains* meeting is to be held at Leonay Golf Club (Emu Plains) on October 30.



COORDINATOR COMMENTS



THE RISE OF THE AI & CHAT GTP

Technology can be absolutely wonderful, freeing our time and energy.

According to McKinsey and company, *Artificial intelligence is a machine's ability to perform the cognitive functions we usually associate with human minds.*

According to Zednet,

ChatGPT is a natural language processing tool driven by AI technology that allows you to have human-like conversations and much more with the chatbot. The language model can answer questions and assist you with tasks, such as composing emails, essays, and code.

When we saw recently that ABC journalist Kirsten Drysdale's saw the birth of her son, as an opportunity in an experiment to test the auto processing of name registration, and registered her own baby's name as 'Methamphetamine Rules', we saw the flaws in the BDM system and the potential flaws in any AI system.

We see that :

1. errors will arise when we exclusively leave AIs and algorithms to process data.
2. Correct data entry is essential.
3. if we make a mistake in data entry, it may not be immediately recognised as an error but could have long reaching ramifications.
4. AIs are flawed. They are created by mere mortals who may not be able to foresee inevitable variations, limitations and ramifications.

The writer, for one is appalled that a journalist would use her own child in an experiment of this nature but the BDM says it has now strengthened the process to avoid a repeat of the error in accepting the name, and according to other media reports, the babies' name has since been 'corrected' noting specifically that it was an error so a formal name change is not necessary. Had a formal name change been required, the baby, when an adult would have been required to disclose the previous name on various documents that ask *"Have you ever been known by another name?"* This was an absurd situation that should not have occurred.

We have all experienced the Chatbots that are supposed to save us time by answering frequently asked question (FAQs) on various websites but then instead of progressing to a solution for a problem, have instead been hampered from finding one, sometimes delayed for hours.

AIs/ChatGTPs can write email and communication but what happens when two organisations both use them to

communicate and you end up

with an endless cycle of autogenerated communication.

And so, given the flaws and limitations, why on earth would any Celebrant choose to use a AIs to create a ceremony, poem or reading and yet some are. Presumably this stems from a lack of confidence, time and or creativity and skills and so where does it leave us.

When an AI is asked to create a script, it scours the internet to crate a composite of text and so in effect plagiarises other's work, snipping words, sentences, phrases, paragraphs or even an entire script to fabricate other works.

Hence a Chat GTP/AI can free our time and energy, but at the cost of craftsmanship, skills and individuality. It can only ever be *human-like*.

Celebrants pride themselves on their ability to craft a unique ceremony and poets give of their souls in their works but an AI has no soul.

I have read poems and scripts written by ChatGTPs and found that whilst they contained words or prose, they lacked context, lacked heart and so lacked the very human essence of a Celebrant's work.

Be creative, Be You.

You are better than a computer program and always will be.



“It's from the A.T.O. - they saw your income and sent you a sympathy card.”