

**December 2023**

**Volume 2, Issue 7**

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



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

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



**Inside 50 pages**

- **Lunch Invite**
- **OPD Reminder**
- Christmas & other festivals
- **NOIM Dates**
- AMC Facebook
- Knowledge Base
- **Life Saving Ceremony**
- **Early Appointments**
- **History & Historical figures**
- **Celebrant Quotes**
- **Lots of Celebrant Snapshots**
- **Remote Witnessing**
- Movie Reviews
- **Marketing**
- Where to Stand
- Coordinator's Comments

**And lots more in 50 pages/50yrs**

**COVER PICTURE**  
2022 Christmas Dinner

**And so we find ourselves in the Christmas season.**

**Merry Christmas!**

**Where did the year go?!!**

Whilst the vast majority of Australians celebrate the Christian Festival of Christmas, according to Time Magazine, there are 11 holidays Celebrated in December but here are 12 events commemorated or celebrated around the world and while Civil Celebrants could be asked to take part in or to even lead:

**1/Advent**

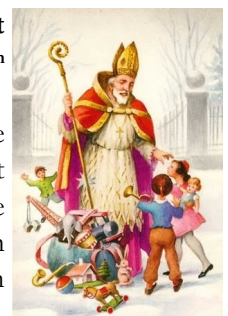
Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year in Western Christianity. The name was adopted from Latin *adventus* "coming; arrival",



translating Greek *parousia* from the New Testament, originally referring to the Second Coming. It is a season observed in most Christian denominations as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Christ at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming and the reception of Christ in the heart of the believer.

**2/ St. Nicholas Day/ the Feast of Saint Nicholas, (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> December)**

Christians honour the birthday of Saint Nicholas who is the patron Saint of Children and the inspiration behind Santa Claus.



Continued page 3.....

**UPCOMING  
Sth COAST  
MEETINGS**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
end of year Lunch at the  
Mollymook Golf Club**

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## THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY

### - CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS -

Every month in this newsletter, one or more Celebrants has been featured to offer a perspective on the diversity of talents, styles, interests and backgrounds. Readers found articles about (or from) Jill Ellen Fuller, Robert Smith, Dally Messenger III, Susie Roberts, Julie Carlton, Lou Szymkow (me), Phil Timbrell, and Mandi Gill. There were also articles on the history of Celebrancy. This month, in the last edition in this historic year, the two genres have merged to capture a 'snapshot' in history of a number of Celebrants so that in 10, 20 or 50 years time, our descendants and perhaps replacements can see how, who we are and what was taking place. All subscribers were invited to participate and so you will find interesting and inspiring articles about, or from those who did respond.

You will also find articles rituals, history on Lois Darcy, Jill-Ellen Fuller, National Treasure Faith Bandler, Sir Garfield Barwick, Lionel Murphy and our current Attorney General, The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP.

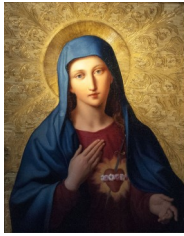
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### 3/ Feast of the Immaculate Conception Day (8<sup>th</sup> December)

Catholics celebrate the day of Immaculate Conception to honour the Virgin Mary, who is believed to have been born without original sin. The event is celebrated at the Catholic Mass



### 4/ Bodhi Day/ Rohatsu (8<sup>th</sup> December)

This Buddhist tradition honours the day on which the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, is said to have achieved 'enlightenment' and is celebrated by many Buddhists through meditation.



### 5/ Feast Day of Our Lady Guadalupe (12<sup>th</sup> December)

Mexicans celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico who symbolizes patriotism and devotion. Millions of pilgrims visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in to celebrate the festival, which marks one of several apparitions of the Virgin Mary witnessed by an Indigenous Mexican man in 1531. The Virgin Mary's face is abundant in Mexico—in homes, shops and shrines.



### 6/ Hanukkah (18<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> December)

This is an eight-day Jewish holiday of Hanukkah beginning on 18<sup>th</sup> December and is a central part of the Jewish Festival of Lights which involves the lighting of a nine-branched menorah each night. (The ninth candle is used to light the others.) The ritual symbolizes how one day's worth of oil miraculously lasted for eight days during a battle between a small group of Jewish people and the powerful Greek-Syrian army in 165 B.C. Per Jewish tradition, they are said to have emerged victorious and reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.



Customary foods include latkes (potato pancakes), sufganiyot (jam-filled donuts) and brisket. Children often play with a dreidel (a spinning top with Hebrew letters).

### 7/ Yule (21<sup>st</sup> December – 1<sup>st</sup> January)

Wiccans and Neo-Pagans celebrate the northern hemisphere's winter solstice (the darkest day of the year, on 21st December) through the festival of Yule. The winter solstice marks the shortest day and longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere; Yule celebrates the re-emergence of the sun and the days beginning to grow



longer again. The festival was first celebrated in Scandinavia as a Norse festival.

A common tradition is burning the yule log, which originally was done to celebrate the sun's return. In the 9th century, Yule became associated with Christmas although some still adhere to the original Yule celebrations.

### 8/ Christmas (25<sup>th</sup> December)

Christians across the world celebrate Christmas to commemorate the birth of Jesus but the festival has also been adopted as a secular family holiday.



It is of course marked by an exchange of gifts as well as excitement for the arrival of Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas).

### 9/ Boxing Day (December 26)

A British tradition that occurs the day after Christmas and dates back to the 1800s and the era of Queen Victoria. At the time, it was a day to ensure that upper class Britons gave servants and workers a day off, in addition to giving them a present. The holiday has since evolved in some parts, to a more commercial occasion for gift-giving but in Australia is a family of recovery from the Christmas feast of the day before.



### 10/ Kwanzaa (26th December—1st January)

The African-American, week-long holiday of Kwanzaa honours African-American heritage and so is a cultural holiday as opposed to a religious one.



Black nationalist Maulana Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 as a way to unite the African-American community following the Watts Rebellion in a predominantly Black Los Angeles neighbourhood. An uprising against systemic racism began after a white California highway patrol officer arrested a young Black man for drink driving. The rebellion led to 34 deaths—two-thirds of which were individuals shot by police or National Guard troops, per the Associated Press. It also resulted in more than 1,000 injuries.

Karenga laid out seven key principles for Kwanzaa: unity; self-determination; collective responsibility; cooperative economics; purpose; creativity; and faith. Its



name comes from the Swahili phrase “matunda ya kwanza,” which translates to “first fruits.” Kwanzaa celebrations draw from African musical and storytelling traditions.

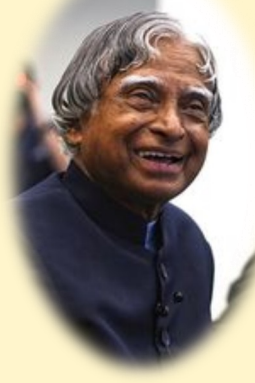
**11/ Zarathosht Diso (26th December)**

Founded by the Prophet Zoroaster more than 3,000 years ago, Zoroastrianism is one of the world’s oldest monotheistic religions. Zoroastrians honour the death of their prophet on this day, typically by visiting a fire temple and offering prayers.



**12/ New Year’s Eve (December 31)**

The day every new year is met with anticipation around the world, as revellers party, set off fireworks, set resolutions and count down to midnight to welcome in new beginnings. In many post-Soviet countries, the holiday is celebrated with traditions similar to Christmas, such as the arrival of gifts from “Grandfather Frost.” who bears a distinct resemblance to Santa Clause.

**If you fail, never give up, because F.A.I.L. means ‘First Attempt In Learning.’**  
**End is not the end, in fact E.N.D. means ‘Effort Never Dies’.**  
**If you get a no answer, remember that N.O. means ‘Next Opportunity’.**

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam  
<http://www.abdulkalam.com/kalam/>

# RITUALS

## Jumping The Broom



Rarely seen in Australia but common in the USA, the couple jump a broom. There are varying stories of its origin but a common belief is that this is an African-American tradition with its roots in slavery times when people who were slaves, were not allowed to marry and so married in secret, jumping the broom to complete their ceremony. Typically the family hold or places a long handled broom on the ground, so that the bride and groom can then jump over it together. The safest method is for it to be on the floor/ground as raising the broom can of course be a trip hazard however some believe that the challenge presented by raising the broom represents the first challenge of the newly married couple and so symbolises their ability to face all challenges together. The broom can then be used to decorate a place of honour in their home, typically above a hearth of similar prominent place.

## Salt

### Ceremony

Originating in Indian weddings, this ceremony involves the bride passing a handful of salt to her groom without spillage. The Groom then passes it back to her and the exchange is repeated three times. The Bride (and perhaps Groom) then performs the salt exchange with all the members of the groom’s family, symbolizing her blending in with her new family.





# President's Report



(FROM THE AMC NOVEMBER NATIONAL NEWSLETTER)

Dear AMC Members

Thank you for your support in being a valued member of Australia's leading only Marriage Celebrant Association. I am proud to say that the AMC is growing and changing with the current times, a new improved attractive website design soon to be launched focuses on Celebrants and couples with more features and functionality stay tuned.

Members are joining weekly and our Regional Coordinators are being part of welcoming new members to the regions.

Our Conference held at the Novotel Brighton Beach was a huge success with not only members but non members attending. Feedback was provided with positive comments on the education session workshops and entertainment and menu.

Our highlight of having Dally Messenger III attend to give us the background history of the past 50yrs was very interesting and educational. Dally's Feedback on AMC was very heartfelt saying that our association seeing the comradeship was the best he had ever seen.

I am very proud to be the President with a wonderful executive committee who all have roles to help manage this amazing association.

We are all volunteers giving what spare time out of our busy lives to contribute to keep our association going.

Kind Regards

**Annemarie McDonell**

**AMC President**



You are invited to our last face to face meeting for 2023 at the Mollymook Golf Club  
Noon  
Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
72 Golf Avenue, Mollymook NSW  
2539  
Phone (02) 4455 1911  
**Bistro Menu**

Please RSVP by 5th Dec. 2022

**I'll reserve a table in the bistro dining area so that we have a view of the magnificent beach**

There is plenty of nearby accommodation if you are travelling and the golf course looks excellent, though hilly. The ocean view from the bistro is magnificent and the food is excellent, though the company will be even better, dress up or down, as you like.

This event is for us to get to meet and enjoy each other's company.



***"I seek to bring joy into every ceremony."***

**Annemarie McDonell**



## The long awaited upgrade of the AMC Webpage is HERE!

The website team of the Executive Committee is thrilled to announce

some exciting news—the new AMC website is now live!

All members are invited to log in to the members' area using your current login details. If you've forgotten these, simply select "Lost your Password" and follow the prompts to reset it.

After logging in, we recommend visiting your profile page (accessible via the members area banner), where you can review your existing information and photos and incorporate any new details we've included.

When updating your profile, please keep the following in mind:

- Make sure you complete all areas of information with content that showcases who you are and the services you provide as a marriage celebrant.
- Utilise a compelling headshot photo for your profile picture to make sure you create a powerful first impression.
- Incorporate as many photos as you like to provide couples with a glimpse of what your ceremonies look like.
- Don't overlook the importance of adding your couples' testimonials, as these reviews can help build trust and credibility and influence potential couples to choose your services.
- Ensure that all your social media accounts, email, and phone numbers are included and accurate. Incorrect information can lead to missed opportunities.
- Lastly, consider showcasing your other services on your profile page to inform couples about your additional offerings.



Once you've updated your profile page, take a tour of the new member's area and explore the exciting features of our revamped AMC website. Please be aware that there might be some delays if many members attempt to access the member's area simultaneously. If you encounter this, we kindly ask you to try accessing it at a later time.

Here is the link (<https://marriagecelebrants.org.au/member/>) to access our members' area.

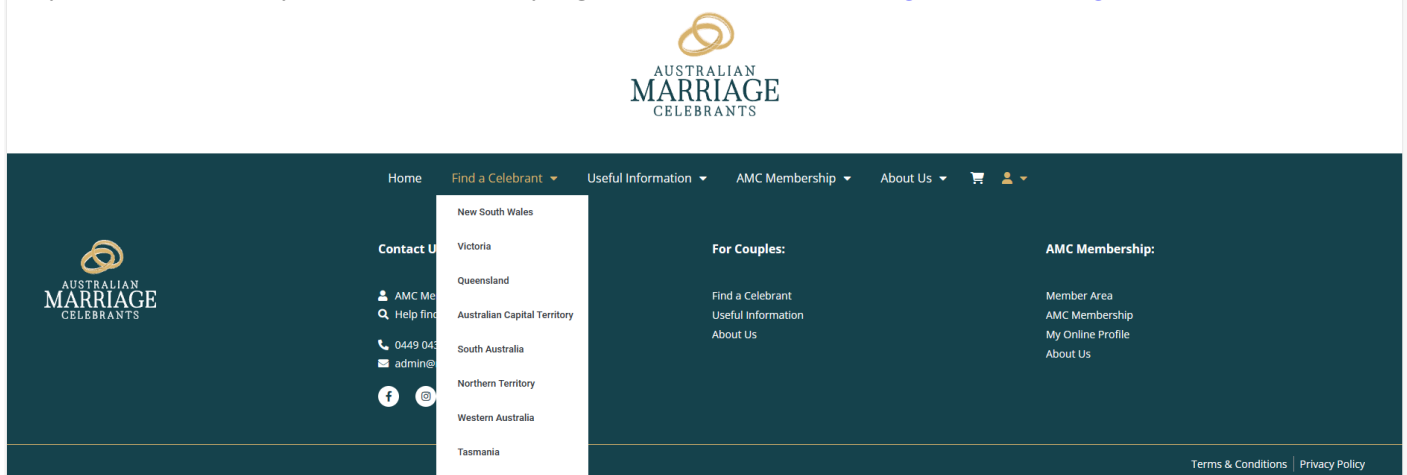
**We trust you will appreciate the improved experience on the enhanced AMC website.**

Warm regards,

The AMC Executive Committee Website Team



**Here is the link to the members area. Please login and check your profile page to review and update if necessary. Save this link to your desktop for easy login access. <https://marriagecelebrants.org.au/member/>**







## 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

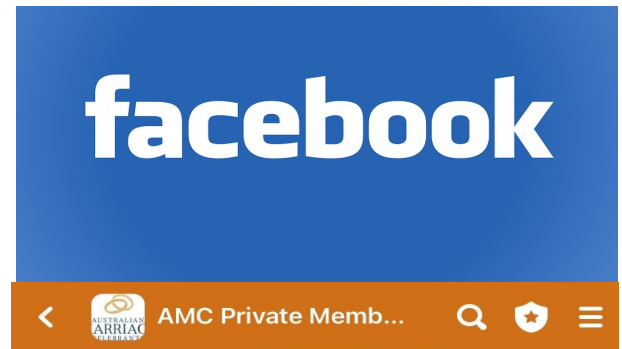
### Office Bearers

- **President & National Regional Coordinator:** 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/>



## AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE

### AMC Private Members Forum >

Private group · 272 members



The AMC provides support for its members, above and beyond that of other associations. Not only does membership provide you with insurance but:

- ♥ Monthly education zoom meetings
- ♥ Webpage support
- ♥ Newsletters such as this one and the National Newsletter
- ♥ Regional Coordinators
- ♥ Regional Meetings
- ♥ Phone support
- ♥ Online resources
- ♥ AMC Private members forum on Facebook
- ♥ AMC Directory listing

**You are urged to join the AMC Private members forum on Facebook because it is an easy, expeditious way to get support and to share your ideas.**



## AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE CELEBRANTS

AMC Members are invited to the Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc. (AMC) Executive Committee Meeting to be held via zoom at :  
**7.00pm, Monday 18th December 2023**

All paid members will have received an invitation via email which includes a link to register for attendance Register in advance for this AGM meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcuf-CspjMsGdcmscyJJ6DyVXDvTlbHkQXp>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the AGM meeting please remember to store the information.

Meeting Agenda

## AMC AGM December 18th 2023

1. WELCOME
2. ATTENDEES
3. APOLOGIES
4. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM
5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT
6. TREASURER'S REPORT
7. COORDINATORS REPORT
8. GENERAL BUSINESS

# H Newsletter History

**This is the biggest Newsletter yet!**  
 Article by Lou Szymkow

It is more a magazine or journal than a newsletter but for very good reason; I have tried to document this year's importance by offering a glimpse of the history of the past 50 years and by capturing contributions by a variety of Celebrants, some mentioning the same events from their own perspective, so that we can see the existent diversity, and so that in 10, 25 or 50 years time, others can see what it was like to be a celebrant in this important year.

Before going on those histories, let's look at the history of this publication and its origin.

Having moved to the South Coast on 17/5/2021, I didn't know the local Celebrants and vendors but was keen to meet and greet and to learn and so when Paul Guy phoned and asked if he could nominate me as the AMC South Coast Regional Coordinator, it was an easy decision. I was given a list of local Celebrants and discovered they lived up to four hours apart. I called each to introduce myself and wanting to keep all informed, started to forward emails of information and education however quickly realised that would become a nuisance and so instead of sending multiple emails, I started to copy and gather information to distribute and the newsletter began in July 2022.

various conflicts of information and so is still a work in progress, but also presented incredible opportunities.

I had the incredible pleasure of speaking with some amazing people such as Robert Smith and Dally Messenger III who guided me to others. As it was now impossible to condense all that had been uncovered into a single article, featuring inspirational Celebrants to in each edition became a practicality and of course, once we entered 2023 what better way to Celebrant, apart from an AMC Conference, but to create Historical Snapshots of a variety of Celebrants to Celebrate different styles, techniques and approaches.

Celebrants who have been featured include Jill Ellen Fuller, Robert Smith (pictured) Dally Messenger III, Susie Roberts, Julie Carlton, Lou Szymkow (me), Phil Timbrell, and Mandi Gill but this month we have a huge and very exciting list of historical and current Celebrants that will enthrall and hopefully inspire us all.



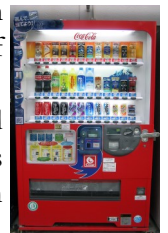
## Marketing

Watched a fantastic video on competition recently. It highlighted the value of competition in stimulating growth.

A Coke dispensing machine was placed in a prominent place and generated sales of about 100 cans of dink per day. Then a Pepsi machine was placed along side. Most would argue, and indeed it is often in supplier contracts, that a business cannot encourage an opposition product but what happened here was interesting and actually quite significant from a marketing perspective because sales of Coke did not drop when the second machine was added but instead increased.

The argument was that when there was one machine, the consumer considered whether or not to buy a Coke, but when the second machine was added, the question became "Do I buy a Coke or a Pepsi?" and so instead of 100 cans overall, both machines were dispensing 200 cans of drink per day and so the competition had actually doubled sales.

The moral here is that competition can increase business. If you advertise in solitude, you may or may not be seen but when others advertise similar services, it is then becomes a choice between services.



**in this issue >>>**

*Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.*  
 Samuel Johnson



An update from your coordinator,  
**Lou Szymkow**

Issue  
**One**

A note or two from your South Coast NSW, Regional Coordinator

Having created a newsletter, I had to fill it and looked at questions being asked in various forums. I then set about trying to give informed responses thus learning through research while educating through dissemination. The newsletter readership began to grow beyond the Sth Coast Region as other Celebrants saw value in the content and connection. Readership is now nationwide and occasionally goes international.

Along the way, other celebrants have wonderfully contributed articles, including but not limited to, Robyn Foster, Phil Timbrell, Lyndal Johnston, and Karen Ambrose who have all contributed fantastic and informative articles. Others occasionally fact checked or proof read articles, including AMC President Annemarie McDonnell and AMC Committee member Paul Guy.

As 2023 approached, there was an obvious need for an article covering a brief history of Celebrancy but as we know, the more you learn, the more you discover there is so much more to learn. The original article soon became a 38 page reference document that raised even more questions and so stimulated more research. That research presented





**The Most despicable scam ever!**

This is undoubtedly the most despicable, sickest, disgusting, insensitive scam I ever encountered. You get a message or a FB Post with a link to a news story about someone’s death. It is presented as a mainstream media video claiming that you and some of your friends have been reported as having been killed in a car accident.

Shocked friends and family might click on the link and a FB log-in screen appears asking you to enter your username and password. The link though is both a virus and phishing scam. It is a trap.

The post may even claim that you have to enter personal data because the video contains a sensitive news story but it is of course entirely a scam to steal your personal information. Note that you wouldn’t have even seen the post itself unless you were already logged in.

Online security experts warn that this phishing scam is designed to steal your Facebook

login credentials and install malware on your device. Once the virus is installed on your computer, the scammer has full access to your account, is able to lock you out by changing the password, send the virus to everyone connected to you on FB and use your identity for other criminal activities such as creating fake bank accounts and loans or posting other adds for pornography or other illicit material.

Telling people that you have died is simply appalling as it could cause unimaginable distress to your loved ones and



friends and could even damage your business.

- Be alert to scams
- Avoid suspicious messages and links
- generally avoid URLs that you don’t recognize or feel may be suspicious.
- Use strong antivirus software



**Australian Government**

**Attorney-General’s Department**

A Media Release from the Attorney General, The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, on 15th November 2023 had some great news for Celebrants and couples.

Amendments to the Marriage Act 1961 introduced for consideration on 15th November 2023 will provide couples with a modern and convenient way to start the legal paperwork for their wedding.

The proposed amendments will allow a Notice of Intended Marriage (the NOIM) to be witnessed via videoconferencing, rather than in person. Remote witnessing will provide greater access and convenience for marrying couples, especially those in rural, remote or regional parts of Australia. The remote witnessing option has been in place as a temporary measure since December 2021 in response to COVID-19. This amendment, if passed, will make it permanent.

Remote witnessing of the NOIM by authorised witnesses, in Australia and overseas, will provide a more convenient way for couples to meet the requirement to give a minimum one month notice before a marriage can be solemnised under the Marriage Act.

**Remote Witnessing to stay!**

Marrying couples will be able to continue to sign and witness the NOIM in person, through the traditional, paper-based method, if they choose.

To ensure that safeguards for real consent to a marriage are maintained, a complementary amendment requires authorised celebrants to meet independently and in person with each party to a marriage before they solemnise a marriage.

The amendments will also confirm the requirement for the physical presence of all parties, including the authorised celebrant and two official witnesses, on the day of the marriage. **More detail on page 15.**

[Making marriage easier and more accessible | Our ministers – Attorney-General’s portfolio](#)

**NEXT MLCS MEETING**



The next MLCS meeting was postponed to 6th December 2023. If you would like any matters raised, please notify the AMC executive with details.

# Calculating NOIM Period



Article by Phil Timbrell

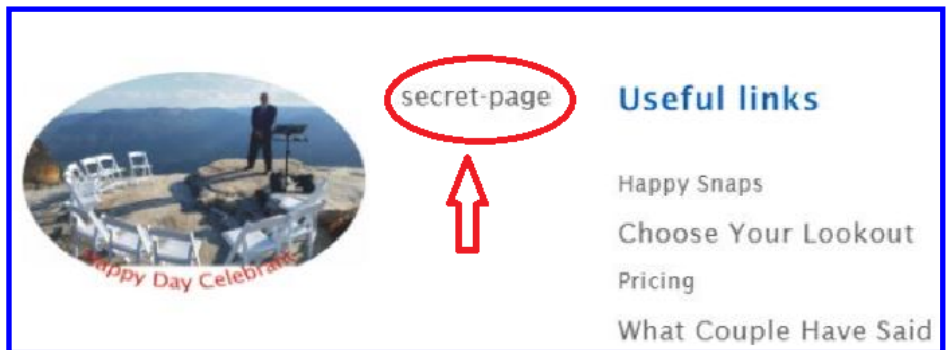
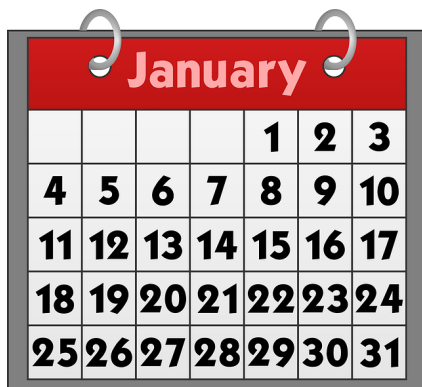
As a student or new celebrant, do you ever get confused with the exact dates for the one month rule and 18 month rule for the NOIM? In the spirit of AMC being helpful to other celebrants, I have written a simple to use spreadsheet that does all the hard work. To use it you simply enter the day of the month, the month and the year that you, the celebrant, received the NOIM – these go into the 3 yellow boxes. It will then show the first date you can conduct the marriage and the last date, using that NOIM.

The spreadsheet can be downloaded from my *secret page*. Simply go to the very bottom of the landing page and you will find in small font the words “secret-page” Click and it will take you to a downloadable spreadsheet that will download to your computer.

The spreadsheet can be opened by the free Libre Office, or using Excel.

The web page can be found at: [www.happydaycelebrant.com.au](http://www.happydaycelebrant.com.au)

Please send any questions or problems back to me at Phil Timbrell Celebrant <happydaycelebrant@gmail.com>



A	B	C	D	E	F
By entering the date you receive a signed and witnessed NOIM into the yellow cells, the earliest possible date for a wedding will appear in the blue cells (assuming no shortening of time)					
Please enter the day you receive the signed and witnessed NOIM	29				
Please enter the month you receive the signed and witnessed NOIM	February				
Please enter the year you receive the signed and witnessed NOIM	2024				
First date to marry	29				
Month	March				
Year	2024				
You must marry before	29				
Month	August				
Year	2025				
If you are having an issue, or suspect an inaccuracy, please email Phil Timbrell at happydaycelebrant@gmail.com					



## GUIDELINES– WITNESSES

The object of requiring the attendance of witnesses is that their evidence will be available to establish the identity of the parties or to testify as to the circumstances in which the ceremony was performed. It is therefore best practice (but not a requirement of the Marriage Act) that the witnesses know the parties to the marriage. Arranging for the attendance of witnesses at the marriage ceremony is the responsibility of the parties to the marriage. The celebrant is not responsible for providing witnesses.



# 'LIFE SAVING CEREMONY'

## CELEBRANT'S FIRST AID SAVES A LIFE AT A WEDDING

Jeff is based on the NSW Central Coast and is full of energy, so much so that he is also a member of the State Emergency Services (SES) and has the highest level of Emergency First Aid accreditation available.

He was performing a wedding ceremony when one of the groomsmen suddenly collapsed, vomiting and injuring himself in the fall.

Jeff acted immediately, asking for a Doctor or First Aider to assist but Jeff was the most qualified in attendance.

With family permission, he checked the patient and found him unresponsive and without a pulse.

CPR began as Jeff issued instructions to all around him, clearing the immediate area, sending someone to his car for the First Aid Kit, another person to the venue office for an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and another to call for an Ambulance.

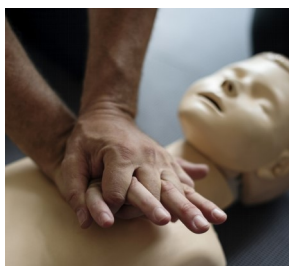
AEDs can be found at a growing number of locations. If you download the 'AED Near Me' app, you will find the nearest to you. They are easy to operate because there are clear and concise instructions on the body of the small device and once opened, the device issues verbal instructions.

Jeff attached the AED pads as per the device's instructions.



The AED, announced that a pulse was not found and then issued the first jolt.

Following the AED directions, the CPR resumed with Jeff having to instruct a guest on how to assist so that Jeff could catch his breath and check the AED as it recharged.



When the AED was ready, a second jolt was issued but still no pulse was found.

After more CPR, a third jolt finally restarted the patient's heart and by this time an Ambulance had arrived.

The Paramedics congratulated an exhausted Jeff on his efforts insisting that without him, the patient would not have survived.

While the patient was then rushed to the nearest hospital, Jeff, now covered in blood and vomit, calmly resumed his duties as Celebrant and after a brief rest and change of clothes, was the reception MC much to the cheering adulation of the bridal party and their guests.

It was a ceremony that all will remember.

Jeff points out that as Celebrants, we are in control of diverse groups and events at which there will always be someone who is older or perhaps of uncertain health and if an emergency occurs, it is the Celebrant who is often aware well before anyone else and so in a position to act.

When it comes to a medical emergency, every second counts. It can be the difference between life and death.

### Jeff strongly recommends that:

- ♥ Every Celebrant obtain a First Aid certificate, It doesn't take long and is not expensive.
- ♥ You have a First Aid Kit in your car.
- ♥ We each consider purchasing an AED which start at about \$2000
- ♥ We all download the 'AED Near Me' app available on both Android and Apple phones so that in an emergency, an AED can quickly be located,
  - <https://nswfirstaid.com.au/aed-locator/>
  - <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/pulsepoint-aed/id867150971>



**"Your actions could mean the difference between life and death."**

Jeff Hindmarsh



# KNOWLEDGE BASE

## A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE IS MORE THAN A PIECE OF PAPER.

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 46 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):

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.

- 3) 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.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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:

- ♥ If you plan to be together forever, get married. It is worth it.
- ♥ 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.
- ♥ 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, or get married
- ♥ Live happily ever after

wedding quote heard recently:

*"Marriage is not a 50/50 deal, it is 100/100.*

*Always remember that Uncle Mike knows how to dissolve a body."*





# KNOWLEDGE BASE

# WHERE TO STAND?

One of the commonly asked questions is “Where do I stand?” That question may refer to the position in the entrance procession or to the position maintained during the marriage ceremony but in both instances, much depends on culture, religion, wedding party size, and of course, innovation. In days of old the potential groom raided a neighbouring village with his Best Man (best fighter) to kidnap a bride, and so at the altar, the bride was at the grooms’ left where he could hold her to prevent escape, but leaving his sword arm free at the

ready to fight off the bride’s father or others who might try to rescue her. The bridesmaids would dress like her wearing veils to confuse would be rescuers (or evil spirits) and stand with her. All faced the altar, but in a Civil Ceremony, there is no altar and couples either face each other or their guests, hence they can stand where they please. In the following pics, positions are broken down to 9 entrance options and 11 ceremony options. The exit procession is usually the reverse of the entrance. These apply regardless of gender.



## Positions in Procession

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
CHRISTIAN	JEWISH	HINDU	WESTERN		MODERN IDEAS & CHOICES			

## Ceremony Positions


# Sir Garfield Barwick



We cannot finish off an historic year of Civil Celebrants without the mention of **Sir Garfield Edward John Barwick AK GCMG QC.**



Lionel Murphy (pic left) is rightly attributed as being the creator of the Civil Celebrant's Program in 1973 but he



could not have achieved that without the work of **Sir Garfield Edward John Barwick AK GCMG QC** 12 years earlier.

According to Sir Garfield "Gar" Barwick's biographer, David Marr, Garfield Barwick, (5ft 4in/162.5cms), of slight build and with a thin, piping voice, went on to have a very distinguished career as both a lawyer and politician. He was born in Cooma on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1903, to a desperately poor, pious and devout Methodist, Cornish family who moved to Stanmore in Sydney. His mother secured him a scholarship to Cleveland Street, then a year later to Fort Street High, and his solid success earned him Bursaries to Sydney University. From where he graduated with a University Medal in law. David Marr wrote:

*"He was the Attorney-General who reformed the divorce laws and the Foreign Minister who put Australian troops in Vietnam. He was the Chief Justice who broke down the tax laws, dramatically advanced the power of Canberra and gave Sir John Kerr the constitutional imprimatur to dismiss the Whitlam government".*

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1929 he married Norma Symons, with whom he would have two children.

Initially a Labor Party supporter, in 1958, Garfield Barwick, aged 54, was a member of the Liberal Party when he was elected to the House of Representatives at the Parramatta by-election, and was re-elected in the general elections of 1958, 1961, and 1963. Prime Minister Robert Menzies made him Attorney-General by the end of the year, and Garfield then guided through legislation amending the **Matrimonial Causes Act**, and in doing so was standing up to his conservative colleagues and to the Catholic Church as he introduced Australia's first no-fault divorce legislation.

He also introduced the Crimes Act and had many other achievements including establishing a model for restrictive trade practices legislation.

After serving as a minister in the Menzies (Liberal) Government from 1958 to 1964, he continued on to become the seventh and longest serving Chief Justice of



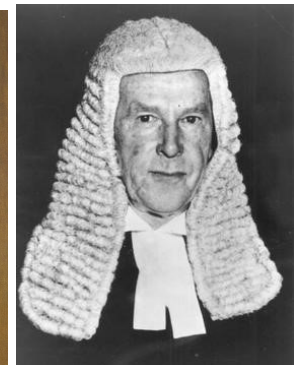
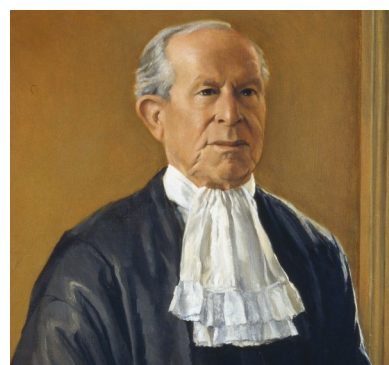
Meeting with John F Kennedy

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHP/1962/Month%2009/Day%2010/JFKWHP-1962-09-10-A>

Australia, in office from 1964 to 1981.

While in government, Sir Garfield Barwick, had won the right in a ballot to purchase a block of land at Red Head (now Bendalong & Manyana) on the South Coast of NSW. The condition of the ballot was that a house had to be built within a year. This means that the Marriage Act may well have been devised on one of the 7 beaches near this newsletter editor's home. In the book titled Five Villages, published by the Five Villages Association, Sir Garfield's daughter, Dee, was quoted as saying that the family would travel from their Beecroft home in the 5 hour journey to Bendalong in their black Pontiac. The Bendalong home was totally self-sufficient with a kerosene fridge, water tank, and a flushing toilet. The Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies asked that a phone line be installed so that his AG could be contactable.

**As it was in 1959, and as the Attorney General, he was the creator of the Marriage Act, it is very likely that he pondered and perhaps even prepared the bill while fishing at Bendalong.** The Villages book has a



Garfield Edward John Barwick, by Brian James Dunlop

Continued next page.....



# H HISTORY

photo of Sir Garfield and two mates holding a fish caught at Bendalong but despite efforts, permission to print the photo here was not secured.

After the 1961 election, Barwick was additionally made Minister for External Affairs. He led the Australian delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations for its 15th, 17th, and 18th sessions. He served as the Chief Justice of Australia, from 1964 to 1981 and was one of only eight justices of the High Court to have served in the Parliament of Australia prior to his appointment to the Court; another was Lionel Murphy.

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## The Hague Convention

This article appeared a few months ago but appears to have been forgotten as questions regarding recognition off marriage have appeared regularly.

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



  
**OPD DUE NOW**

**PULL**  **DOWN**  
**GET IT DONE**

To fulfil your 2023 Professional Development obligations, you must complete and submit both OPD online activities via the Marriage Celebrant (MarCel) Portal by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. Whilst the OPD is free of charge, the fee to [apply to not complete ongoing professional development for 1 year](#) is \$30

If you have not yet paid your \$170 annual charge to renew your registration as a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant, you needed to do that by 6/11/2023 and if you didn't, it is now too late as the law is finite, no payment by the due date, you will be deregistered though in special situations, you can [apply to not pay the annual charge for 1 year](#) but the fee to apply to not pay the annual charge for 1 year is \$30 but that also should have been done earlier.

Note that all fees are non-refundable.



This is a sequel to the highly acclaimed movie, *The Book Club* and once again follows the four best friends, played by [Diane Keaton](#), [Jane Fonda](#), [Candice Bergen](#) and [Mary Steenburgen](#), but this time they take their book club to Italy for the fun girls trip they never had as they prepare for a wedding.

There is the full package of a bridezilla, dress choices dilemmas, wedding planners, anxiety, cancellation(?), romance, comedy, a lost Minister; and so basically covers every disaster that can occur at an expensive wedding but importantly it highlights that love and marriage do occur at any age, that obstacles can be overcome, that vows from the heart are wonderful, and that every ceremony, commitment or marriage, can be beautiful.

[Book Club: The Next Chapter \(2023\) - IMDb](#)



We have seen the growth of huge funeral corporations in Australia with larger corporations, some international, taking over family owned businesses. This story is perhaps a warning of what can happen when there is an imbalance of power and when greed overshadows equity. According to USA Today's [Marco della Cava](#), "The Burial," was adapted from a 1999 New Yorker article by Jonathan Harr, telling the story of a case, lawyer Willie Gary won in 1995.

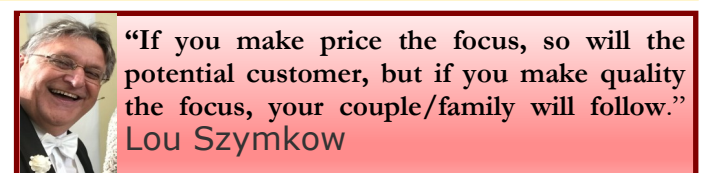
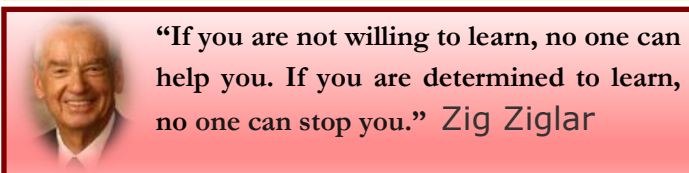
The white owner of a chain of Mississippi funeral homes, Jeremiah O'Keefe (*played by Academy Award® winner Tommy Lee Jones*), hired Willie E. Gary (*played by Academy Award® winner Jamie Foxx*), to sue a Canadian funeral industry behemoth, The Loewen Group, for breach of contract after a hand shake deal was not honoured.

This new release movie is therefore inspired by true events and is an insight into what can happen if the funeral industry is engulfed by profit focused, huge conglomerate. We see the lawyer help save the family business from the corporate behemoth, exposing a complex web of race, power, and injustice, exposing greed, corporate corruption and racial injustice

During the movie, you might question what has race got to do with a contract dispute but according to one reviewer, who tags himself as [digdog-785-717538](#) :

*While the film is not race-based, it does not pretend that race isn't a factor when Evil Corporation is wilfully targeting the most impoverished areas of the south.*

For funeral Celebrants and the funeral industry in Australia, it is perhaps a warning to be weary.





# THE CURRENT AG & NEW CHANGES

## The Hon. Mark Alfred DREYFUS, KC



was born in Perth on 3rd October 1956. He is a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and was elected to the House of Representatives for Isaacs, Victoria, in 2007 and then re-elected in 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022.

He is the current Attorney General in the Albanese Government.

His Qualifications and Occupations include:

- BA (University of Melbourne).
- LLB (University of Melbourne).
- Field officer of the Northern Land Council, Darwin, from 1979 to 1981.
- Research Fellow at the National Research Institute of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine, 1982.
- Solicitor from 1982 to 1985.
- Ministerial adviser to the Attorney-General, Minister for Planning and Minister for Corrections (Vic.) from 1985 to 1987.
- Barrister from 1987
- Appointed Queen's Counsel from 1999
- Elected to House of Reps in 2007

As Attorney General, on 15th November 2023, he introduced the Attorney-General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Bill 2023 to the House of Representatives for its second reading.

[ParlInfo - Biography for DREYFUS, the Hon. Mark Alfred, KC](#)

In his speech to Parliament, he said that the *Attorney-General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Bill 2023* will make a range of important amendments to update, clarify and improve the intended operation of legislation administered by the Attorney-General.

The bill will enhance the capacity of the Australian court system to deal with corporate criminal offences and enable a more efficient jury preparation process in the Federal Court of Australia.

The bill will also deliver on the government's election commitment to abolish the Native Title Respondents Scheme. The bill will:

- clarify and improve the operation of the Commonwealth Marriage Celebrants Program;
- provide greater accessibility for marrying couples; and remove the administrative burden on the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia in relation to the arbitration framework in family law matters.
- The bill will make minor amendments to the Marriage Act 1961 to clarify and improve the operation of the Marriage Celebrants Program and provide greater accessibility for marrying couples.
- The amendments will improve accessibility by permanently allowing the option of virtual

witnessing for notices of intended marriage. Marrying couples, particularly those in rural and regional areas, will greatly benefit from this change.

- To ensure the foundational requirement of consent is safeguarded, a complementary amendment requires authorised celebrants to meet independently and in person with each party to a marriage before they solemnise the marriage.
- The reasons for transferring a notice of intended marriage have also been extended to allow for circumstances where the marrying couple want to change their celebrant.
- The amendments will clarify that an authorised celebrant can only be registered in one subdivision at any time, and that marriage must be solemnised in the physical presence of an authorised celebrant.
- The identity requirements to be provided to an authorised celebrant will be clarified by providing that a statutory declaration can be used to provide identity details if it is impracticable to obtain an official record of birth and the person does not have a current passport.
- The Commonwealth Marriage Celebrants Program will be improved by extending the time frame for assessing applications to allow applicants the best opportunity to complete their applications and inserting a power to refund application fees in the Marriage Act where an applicant does not have the mandatory qualification.
- Deputy registrars will be able to be appointed to assist the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants to, among other things, process the large volume of applications to become a marriage celebrant.

Here is an extract copied and pasted from the [Explanatory Memorandum](#) offering a more detailed explanation of the impact the proposed amendments will have on the Marriage Act 1961, and as outlined in Schedule 3:

### Schedule 3—Amendment of the Marriage Act 1961

10. The Marriage Act establishes the legal framework for marriage in Australia, including the requirements for marriages to be validly solemnised under Australian law. This includes a requirement that marriages must be solemnised by an 'authorised celebrant'. The Marriage Act establishes the position of 'Registrar of Marriage Celebrants' (section 39A of the Marriage Act). The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants is required to maintain the public register of marriage celebrants (section 39B of the Marriage Act), and is responsible for administering the Marriage Celebrants Program. The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants registers and regulates marriage celebrants.
11. The Bill will make minor technical amendments to clarify and improve the operation of the Commonwealth Marriage Celebrants Program and provides greater accessibility for marrying couples.
12. Marrying couples in Australia are required to provide a Notice of Intended Marriage (NOIM) to their authorised celebrant at least one month before the marriage is solemnised. The Marriage Act currently requires the NOIM to be completed and signed 'in the presence of an

authorised witness before it is given to the marriage celebrant, at which point the minimum one month notice period commences. The Bill will make amendments affecting the NOIM to ensure that it reflects the way that marrying couples and authorised marriage celebrants want to engage and making marriage more accessible.

#### **The Notice of Intended Marriage**

13. In addition to the witnessing of a NOIM in person, the Bill will amend the Marriage Act to provide the option to have the NOIM witnessed remotely, via video link or audio-visual link. The current requirements regarding witnessing, as set out in section 42 of the Marriage Act, require that the NOIM must be signed by the parties getting married in the physical presence of the authorised witness as specified in paragraphs 42(2)(c)-(d) of the Marriage Act. The type of authorised witness varies depending if a person is signing the NOIM in Australia or overseas. The requirements for authorised witnesses will remain unchanged and location-dependent. The option to remotely witness the signing of the NOIM by the parties to the marriage whether in Australia or overseas, will apply to all authorised witnesses regardless of their location.
14. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary measures were put in place to enable couples to sign their NOIM remotely to allow them to marry during this time. The most recent instrument, the *Coronavirus Economic Response Package (Modifications—Statutory Declarations and Notices of Intention to Marry) Determination 2021* (the Determination), allows a NOIM to be signed and witnessed ‘under the observation’ of an authorised witness using electronic means, a video link or audio-visual link between persons in different places. The Determination is due to end after 31 December 2023.
15. The Bill will amend paragraphs 42(2)(c) (authorised witnesses in Australia) and (d) (authorised witnesses overseas) of the Marriage Act to enable an authorised witness to remotely witness the signing of the NOIM by the parties to the marriage.
16. The option to sign under the ‘observation of an authorised witness’ will be in addition to the ability to sign the NOIM in the presence of an authorised witness. The requirements for each option are functionally equivalent, meaning that each method of making a NOIM produces an equally valid and legally robust document. This item will not remove or modify the other requirements for the giving of a NOIM under the Marriage Act. The addition of this option, will ensure marriage remains accessible, especially for those in rural, regional and remote communities.
17. The Bill will require an authorised celebrant to physically meet separately with each party to the marriage before the marriage is solemnised. This provides an additional safeguard, where the NOIM is remotely witnessed, or witnessed by an

authorised person other than a celebrant. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that each party is freely and voluntarily consenting to the marriage; this can occur at any time up to and including on the day the marriage is solemnised. It is anticipated that this new requirement will generally have minimal impact, given the majority of celebrants already meet personally with each marrying couple before solemnisation of the marriage and must in any case be physically present with the couple on the day of the marriage. Arrangements for the pre-solemnisation independent meetings with the parties, will be for those involved to determine as convenient.

18. The Bill will also extend the reasons for when a NOIM can be transferred to another authorised celebrant, to include the request of the marrying couple. The current reasons are limited to death, absence or illness of the celebrant or where it is otherwise impracticable to solemnise the marriage.

#### **Changes to the Marriage Celebrants Program**

19. The Bill will introduce a number of operational measures to improve the experiences of marrying couples and celebrants, and assist the efficiency of the administration of the Marriage Celebrants Program.
20. The Bill will clarify that a marriage must be solemnised in the ‘physical presence’ of an authorised celebrant and two witnesses. The word ‘presence’ is not currently defined in the Marriage Act. The requirement that a marriage be solemnised in the physical presence of a celebrant is to ensure the requirements of a legally valid marriage have been met. This includes ensuring the parties understand and give real consent to the marriage, and that they receive, sign and provide the required marriage documentation, necessary at the time of the ceremony.
21. The Bill will also clarify that the three categories of authorised celebrants in Australia (Ministers of Religion of recognised denominations (subdivision A), State and Territory Officers (subdivision B), and Commonwealth-registered civil/religious celebrants (subdivision C)) cannot be registered in more than one Subdivision at the same time. This is intended to ensure celebrants and regulators have clear and unambiguous obligations, which will better support legal marriage, and remove risks, administrative complexity and costs associated with individual celebrants being authorised under multiple regulatory regimes. Commonwealth registered marriage celebrants will retain the choice to identify as religious marriage celebrants.
22. The Bill will clarify the identity requirements in respect of giving a NOIM. Currently, the Marriage Act states that a party can provide a statutory declaration where an official certificate or official extract of an entry in an official register is not able to be produced. The Bill will clarify that a Commonwealth Statutory Declaration should only be used as evidence of date and place of birth, where a party does not have a passport or it is practically impossible to obtain an official certificate or official extract of an entry in an official register, showing the date and place of birth of a party. It is not considered practically impossible for a party born in Australia to obtain an official certificate, such as a birth certificate which records date and place of birth.

Continued next page.....



- 23 The Bill will enable the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants to appoint one or more departmental employees to the role of Deputy Registrar of Marriage Celebrants, to undertake any of the functions or powers conferred by delegation. This will improve the efficiency of services provided by the program to aspiring celebrants, as presently statutory decisions may only be made by the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants and this limits the volume of decisions which can be made. Deputy Registrars would be designated from amongst Australian Public Service employees of the Attorney-General's Department.
24. To ensure an appropriate level of oversight of the program, the following functions or powers will not be delegable: determining the number and basis of positions of Deputy Registrars of Marriage Celebrants; determining the qualifications and/or skills that a person must have to be registered as a marriage celebrant; approving the form of a notice that a person wishes to be identified as a religious marriage celebrant on the register of marriage celebrants; requiring professional development activities; taking a disciplinary measure against a marriage celebrant; and establishing complaints resolution procedures to resolve complaints about the solemnisation of marriages by marriage celebrants.
25. The Bill will extend the timeframe in which to assess an application for registration as a marriage celebrant from three to six months. Currently, the Registrar has three months, from the time a complete application is made, to make a decision or it is deemed to be a refusal. The extension of time would ensure applicants have sufficient time to supply all information required and provide for circumstances where there is a need for additional information or enquiries. It also provides the Registrar with the ability to request further information from the applicant where needed. While applications will be progressed as expeditiously as possible, this will provide greater certainty about the maximum period of time for a decision to be made. The six month timeframe will apply whether or not additional information is required. A corresponding amendment will be made for applications for registration as a Minister of Religion under subdivision A of division 1 of part IV of the Marriage Act.
- 26 The Bill will also provide for the refund of an application fee where a person makes an application but misunderstands the application criteria and does not have the necessary qualifications, either a Certificate IV in Celebrancy or celebrancy skills. In some instances, applicants who seek to become registered apply and pay the application fee without holding the Certificate IV in Celebrancy.



# Marketing



**SMILE,  
YOU ARE  
ON  
CAMERA**

How many times have you heard that line?

Someone points a camera at you and says 'smile' and then you force a smile and end up looking like an escapee from an asylum.

Then as Celebrants, we are often told to keep out of shot so the photographer can get a clear image of the couple however at a



ceremony, the photographer is constantly at work. The couple are likely to have paid far more for the photographer than they did for the Celebrant and want their money's worth. They want brilliant photos of a very special occasion. The Celebrant is of course part of that. Those same photographs are your greatest advertisement. Couples and photographers share their photos online. The photographer will use great photos to advertise their own services and couples want to brag about their wonderful wedding and will share photos with friends and family. Help make that photo look good and you are taking advantage of free promotion.

Referrals from happy customers and delighted vendors are free and boost your business immeasurably.

Those same photos are also used in your own advertising and promotions and so even if you have wonderful words and phrases on your webpage as well as terrific reviews, they can be completely lost if the photos show the 'crazy ugly camera face'.

Check your webpage and social media accounts and review your own photos. Will they get you business?

TIP: Look into the mirror and practice smiling and posing for photos.

Search the web for tips and talk to photographers about getting the best images. Here is a start.

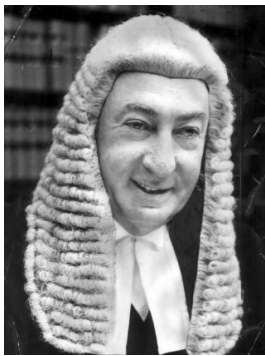
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- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPv\\_b-th13M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPv_b-th13M)
- <https://www.brides.com/wedding-photo-posing-tips-7229592>

# H HISTORY

## Lionel Keith Murphy

Murphy's greatest political achievements were as attorney-general, although even that assessment is contentious.

**Lionel Keith Murphy (1922-1986)**, according to his biographer, by Brian Galligan, was a barrister, judge and politician, who was born on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1922 at Kensington, Sydney, sixth of seven children of Irish-born William Murphy, hotelkeeper at the Four-in-Hand, Paddington, and his wife Lily, née Murphy, born in Tasmania. Named 'Lionel' at birth, he added his second-eldest brother's name to his own after Keith died in 1939. Lionel attended Kensington Public School and, after repeating his final year (dux, 1935), the selective Sydney Boys' High School. Supported by his parents, who had prospered through property investment and opened a general store at Lindfield, Lionel entered the University of Sydney (B.Sc., 1945, LL.B Hons, 1949), initially studying organic chemistry.



After completing two years of his law degree he passed the Barristers' Admission Board examination and was admitted on 2 May 1947 to the New South Wales Bar. He had joined the Australian Labor Party in 1946.

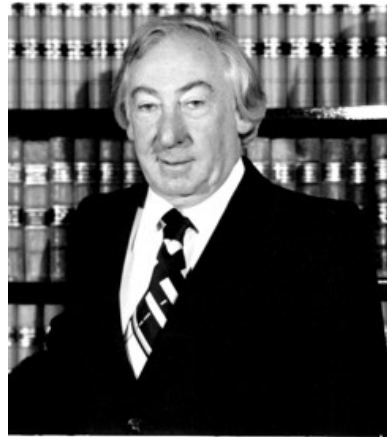
He lived with his widowed mother in her Lindfield home until his marriage on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1954 to a Russian migrant Nina

Morrow, née Vishegorodsky (known as Svidersky), at St John's Church of England, Darlinghurst but they divorced in 1967.

Two years later, in the registrar's office in Hong Kong, on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1969, he married Ingrid Gee, formerly Grzonkowski, a model and a television quiz-show compère, who had been born in German-occupied Poland.

Murphy helped to change ALPs emphasis from old-style economic and socialist intervention to human rights and social justice.

Appointed the leader of the government in the Senate in the Whitlam government, Murphy was also Attorney-General, Minister For Customs And Excise, and Minister In the Senate representing the Prime Minister and the Minister For Science (1972-75). He was a controversial figure, viewed either as a reforming attorney-general or as the driven, somewhat erratic minister, pushing legislative reform. Critics painted him as a dangerous radical, impatient with long-established legal and social arrangements. Some saw him as a man prone to extremes, particularly when in 1973 he personally led a police raid on the Melbourne headquarters of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization.



He initiated the Death Penalty Abolition Act 1973 and the Law Reform Commission Act 1973 that established the Australian Law Reform Commission; he appointed Michael Kirby as its inaugural chairman. The Australian Legal Aid Office was created that year. Murphy's Trade Practices Act 1974 established the Australian

Trade Practices Commission to better regulate commerce. Controversial matters such as the revamping of family law were vigorously debated and revised by a hostile Senate. The Family Law Act 1975 simplified divorce proceedings to sanction the 'no-fault' irretrievable breakdown of marriage, established by twelve months separation. In 1973 Murphy had secularised marriage through the authorisation of civil celebrants. According to a Senate colleague, James McClelland, Murphy was a 'passionate and indefatigable promoter of his reforms'.

It is acknowledged that Lionel Murphy and Australia led the Western world in establishing ceremonies of meaning and substance for secular people. New Zealand in 1977, the United Kingdom c. 1980 and the United States in 2002 have followed the Australian model.

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 1973, **Lois D'Arcy**, a 26 year old mother of two babies, a teacher on the Gold Coast, was the first independent civil marriage celebrant ever appointed by the reformist Attorney-General Lionel Murphy. In an 1992 address to celebrants, she described Murphy's personal involvement in using the Marriage Act's powers and bypassing the bureaucracy as heroic to the first civil celebrants. Her appointment was followed by fellow Queenslanders Angela Burns and John Mayne.

Whilst many Western nations permit civil celebrants to perform a variety of ceremonies, Australia, largely due to the support of the Attorney-General Lionel Murphy in the 1970s, was the first nation to appoint non-clergy celebrants giving civil and religious wedding ceremonies equal cultural status and now around 70-80% of weddings are officiated by Civil Celebrants.





According to former Catholic priest, teacher, author and pioneer civil celebrant Dally Messenger III, he was the first ever to apply to become a Civil Marriage Celebrant under the provisions of the new Commonwealth Marriage Act of Australia (1961), to Sir Garfield Barwick but was refused. When Lionel Murphy became the Attorney General, he was told of the refusal but staff initially could not find the file however a very pleasantly surprised Dally was finally appointed by telegram on the **27/02/1974**



Dally Messenger II says:

*The civil celebrant program is almost entirely the result of one man's vision. Murphy himself told me the story of how he was opposed by his own staff, the public service, his fellow members of parliament and officials of the Labour Party. He defied all, and, on 19 July 1973, in the dead of night, typed the first appointment himself, found the envelope and stamp, walked to a post box and posted it himself.*

According to Dally Messenger:

*Murphy took an enthusiastic interest in this programme - sending telegrams of congratulation to the first several hundred couples married by civil celebrants and would often unexpectedly turn up uninvited to weddings performed by celebrants to delight in his achievement*

Lionel Murphy himself founded the first celebrant organisation on 3 May 1974 when he called all the celebrants he had appointed to that date, to his office in Sydney. He explained to the celebrants who were present that the Labor Party was sure to lose the upcoming election and so Celebrants would need an organisation so that they could speak with one voice, especially if their very existence was threatened by a conservative (Liberal) government. He appointed a well-known model, Jill-Ellen Fuller, as the inaugural president of the Australian Civil Marriage Celebrants Association (ACMCA). He placed his own personal secretary, Maureen Barron, as temporary secretary but soon officially appointed Dally Messenger III.

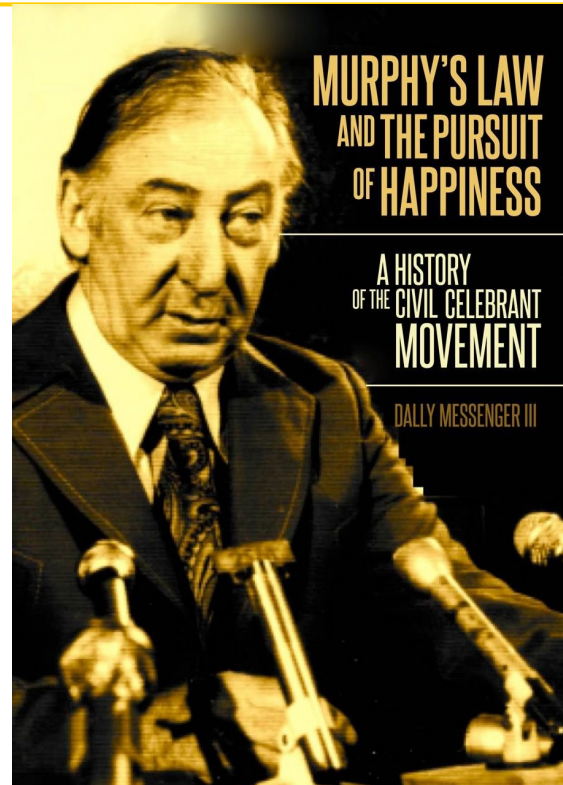
The 25th anniversary of Civil Celebrancy was celebrated in Melbourne in 1998 and was fully funded by the AG. It comprised of a full weekend of activities including a memorial tribute ceremony to Lionel Murphy at which Dally Messenger gave an address and so it was fitting that he should, do the same at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

#### References

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lionel\\_Murphy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lionel_Murphy)
- <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murphy-lionel-keith-15823>
- Dally Messenger III

### Marriage Act 1961, Section 43

**“A marriage may be solemnised on any day, at any time and at any place.”**



## Murphy's Motivation

According to author, Amanda Lohrey, in an interview of Dally Messenger, it was in the early 1970s that Lionel Murphy was asked to act as a witness at a friend's wedding in the Sydney Registry Office.

Dally said:

*“In those days the bridal couples were lined up to wait their turn on a wooden bench until summoned in fours like cattle herded into a saleyard. After a few dry words intoned by a poker-faced official they were shown the door and the next batch shuffled into place. It was as if, to quote Messenger, ‘society was humiliating you for failing to toe the church line. To some this might have the ring of overstatement but not for me. I remember the era well and the shabby aura that attached to civil marriages, the often sneering tone in which a Registry Office ceremony was spoken of. It was not a proper marriage. So appalled was Murphy at the indignity of this ceremony that he resolved to do something about it. In the 1961 Marriage Act introduced into legislation by Garfield Barwick there was an existing provision that authorised the Attorney-General to appoint marriage celebrants.*

In section 39, Murphy saw an opportunity to create a civil ceremony that would bypass what he described as the degrading environment of state Registry Offices.

# H HISTORY

## THE HISTORY OF CIVIL CELEBRANTS

### Faith Bandler



**Faith Bandler** (September 27, 1918 - February 13, 2015), was a remarkable woman, a National Treasure, and was also a Marriage Celebrant.

Faith was appointed by Attorney General Lionel Murphy as a marriage Celebrant under her birth name of Ida Bandler from

25/08/1975 and she retained registration until her resignation on 14/08/1991.

According to her daughter Lilon Bandler, "She really just did it for just a few for close friends, and then for me". Lilon's own marriage ceremony was in August 1987 was perhaps Faith's last however according to Lilon, was a beautiful ceremony.

**Faith Bandler**, who was born **Ida Lessing Faith Mussing**, in Tumbulgum, New South Wales, and became on a prominent Australian civil rights activist, advocating for the rights of Indigenous Australians as well as South Sea Islander people who were brought to Australia, often forcibly, from the islands of the southwestern Pacific Ocean during the late 19th century.

She was instrumental in getting the Australian federal government to recognize Indigenous peoples in the national census and to remove language from the Australian constitution that discriminated against them.

Her father Wacvie Mussingkon, son of Baddick and Lessing Mussingkon, was himself a South Sea Islander person who had been kidnapped (*blackbirded*) from Biap, on Ambrym Island, in what is now Vanuatu as a boy, aged about 13 years, in 1883. He was then sent to Mackay, Queensland, before being sent to work on a sugar cane plantation. He escaped slavery in 1897 and married Ida Vennor, an Australian born, Scottish-Indian woman. The marriage helped him secure legal residency as the government of the day chose to deport anyone who had been Blackbirded, insisting the victims had been engaged in voluntary indentured employment.

Faith was the second of 8 children however her father died when she was only four or five.

As a student at a high school in Murwillumbah, New South Wales, she encountered racial abuse from other students.

During World War II she joined the Australian Women's Land Army with her sister Kath, to work on farms while male workers were fighting in the war. After the war, she worked in a shirt factory and became involved with left-wing circles in the Sydney suburb Kings Cross. In 1951 she participated in the Unity Dance Group, founded by choreographer Margaret Walker, and left Australia for a time to perform in Europe as the lead in "The Dance of

the Aboriginal Girl," based on a poem written by Langston Hughes.

In 1952 she returned to Australia and married Hans Bandler, a Jewish refugee who had escaped Nazi Germany. Hans Bandler's support of Faith Bandler's activism proved invaluable to her lifelong commitment to civil rights. Their daughter, Lilon Bandler was born in 1954.

Bandler had previously met and been influenced by Australian human rights activist Jessie Street and Aboriginal civil rights activist Pearl Gibbs. In 1956 Bandler and Gibbs helped found the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship to advance Aboriginal rights.

The next year Faith Bandler began a 10 year campaign which included several massive petitions and hundreds of public meetings arranged by Bandler at which she gave impassioned speeches, resulting in the 1967 referendum being put to the people by the Holt government (*picture with PM Harold Holt*). The referendum succeeded in all six states, attracting 90.77 percent votes of support across the country, which gave the Federal



Government the power to make laws for Indigenous Australians in states, as well as including them in population counts (the Australian census).

Faith is quoted at the National Museum of Australia (NMA) as having said:

"There were times when I would take as many as three meetings in a day. And I did things that I would never have dreamed of doing: like going into a pulpit, talking to church congregations, and putting up with people whose ideas were totally foreign to me. And all I wanted was

their vote".

Faith Bandler became involved with the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and served as the organization's secretary in the early 1970s, but she left after tensions arose over her not being an Aboriginal person nor a Torres Strait Islander person. She however continued to fight for the rights of South Sea Islander people.

Bandler went to her father's homeland of Vanuatu in the 1970s, and documented the exploitation at the hands of labour traffickers and sugarcane growers. In 1974 she helped to form the Australian South Sea Islanders United Council to improve housing, education, and health services for the South Sea Islander community in Australia. In 1976 she was offered to be made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for her work, but she declined in protest of the dismissal of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam by Australia's governor-general John Kerr.

The Australian South Sea Islanders United Council asked the government to investigate the disadvantages faced by



# H THE HISTORY OF CIVIL CELEBRANTS

**HISTORY** South Sea Islander people and in 1992 as The Call for Recognition report was published. In response, the Federal government officially recognized the Australian South Sea Islander community as a distinct ethnic group in Australia and acknowledged the injustices its people had suffered.

Faith Bandler wrote several books, about her experiences with the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship and the Federal Council. In 1997 she was awarded the Human Rights Medal by the Australia Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and was named a National Living Treasure. She was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2009.

It is clear that Faith Bandler would have been a remarkable Celebrant with incredible connections across cultures and all circles of Australian culture. As an advocate for human rights, she continues to be an inspiration to people across the nation and especially to her daughter, r Lilon Bandler who is an Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow for Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education ([LIME](#)) Network, working with the team on the Indigenous Health Curriculum Framework, the scoping study on a Community of Practice for all the health sciences, and the work with specialist medical colleges. Lilon has been involved in medical education across the healthcare sector.

At the Sydney Medical School (2006-2019) she managed the admission pathways and provided a comprehensive support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students. She developed, implemented and evaluated the Indigenous health education program and is the Medical Director of Wayside Healthcare, at [Wayside Chapel, Sydney](#).



## Faith Bandler's Honours and awards:

- appointed a Member of the [Order of the British Empire](#) (MBE) in 1976,<sup>[12]</sup> but she declined to accept it<sup>[13]</sup>
  - appointed a Member of the [Order of Australia](#) (AM) on 11 June 1984, in recognition of her service to Aboriginal welfare<sup>[14]</sup>
  - awarded an [honorary doctorate](#) from [Macquarie University](#) in 1994<sup>[15]</sup>
  - awarded the 1997 [Human Rights Medal](#) by the then [Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission](#)
  - named as one of the 100 inaugural [Australian Living Treasures](#) by the [National Trust of Australia](#)
  - invested as a Companion of the [Order of Australia](#) (AC) on 26 January 2009 ([Australia Day](#))<sup>[16][17]</sup>
  - included on the [Victorian Honour Roll of Women](#) in 2001
- A 1993 portrait of Bandler by artist Margaret Woodward is held by the [State Library of New South Wales](#).<sup>[18]</sup>
- Following her death, Prime Minister [Tony Abbott](#) offered Bandler's family a [state funeral](#).<sup>[19]</sup>

## References

- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Faith-Bandler>
- [1967 Australian referendum \(Aboriginals\) - Wikipedia](#)
- [Faith Bandler's gloves | National Museum of Australia \(nma.gov.au\)](#)
- [A/Prof. Lilon Bandler | LIME Network](#)

# CELEBRANT SNAPSHOT



Capturing a snapshot in 2023, this 50th year of the Civil Celebrant's Program, through Celebrating the stories of current and past celebrants so that others may be inspired or find commonality; and so that in 10, 20, 25, or 50 years more, others will come to know the personal aspirations of celebrants while gaining an insight into the history of Celebrancy in Australia.

## Annemarie McDonell



**Annemarie McDonell** is an Authorised Civil Marriage Celebrant. and the current President of Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc (AMC) [ceremony4u@gmail.com](mailto:ceremony4u@gmail.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/Ceremony4U>  
0433 930 352

### She seeks to bring joy into every ceremony.



Living in St Clair, in Western Sydney, she is caring and compassionate, good natured and a great communicator, she relate well with all different cultural backgrounds and endeavours to create a ceremony to suit individual needs.

She was born in the UK and arrived in Australia at just 6 years age with her family. When she finished high school she worked at the local

council as a records clerk, then became a security officer for baggage collections before delving into a career as a

registered nurse while in her 'spare time' completed studies in IT.

In 2006 she came across an advertisement for a course in Celebrancy.

She soon gained her first certificate in general celebrancy to conduct

baby namings, and ceremonies before moving on to become a funeral celebrant and then finally undertaking a marriage celebrant's course to become an authorised Marriage Celebrant in 2008.

She continues expanding her studies in diverse fields but **Annemarie loves weddings and all happy occasions**



# H THE HISTORY OF CIVIL CELEBRANTS

## Lois Darcy

We cannot discuss the history of Celebrancy without a mention of Lois Darcy.

According to her LinkedIn profile, in 1984-85 she completed a Graduate Diploma of Teacher-Librarianship at Griffith University and in 2003 Lois graduated from Dally Messenger's International College of Celebrancy (Australia) with a Diploma of Celebrancy in 2003

[Education](#) | [Lois D'Arcy](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



In an article by [Linda Muller](#), published in the Redland News, (Qld) on 27th July 2023, Lois was quoted as saying that the move was mooted by Senator Lionel Murphy who asked her if she was interested in the role at a Labor Party convention and then *"A few weeks later a large envelope arrived in the mail, telling me I was authorised as a civil celebrant,"* she said.

In the article, Lois mentioned that her first ceremony was held at a farmhouse at Coomera, when a young couple were married at the bride's home and that later that day, she performed a double wedding ceremony for two couples in Surfers Paradise.

She has since performed over 2600 ceremonies.



*"A few weeks later a large envelope arrived in the mail, telling me I was authorised as a civil celebrant,"* Lois Darcy.

### 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 program. 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!







# Early Appointments

This is of course not a complete list, but only some that I was to discover in research and interviews.

On Thursday 19th July 1973, **Lois D'Arcy**, a 26 year old mother of two babies, a teacher on the Gold Coast, was the first Civil Celebrant appointed by Lionel Murphy.

On 24 July 1973, **Lyn Knorr** was at the time, working in Canberra, at Parliament House on the staff of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Lionel Bowen and was the second Commonwealth appointed civil celebrant and the first in Victoria.

Other appointees are listed below.

## Victoria

- Dr Bill Cook
- Vic Parsons, President of the ACMCA for seven years and President of the Victorian Branch of the ACMCA for nine years.
- Jack Dunn a founding member of the ACMCA Victorian Branch,
- James Loughnan
- Rick Barclay.
- Frank Raggatt (first Treasurer & then President of the ACMCV) & ran one of the early courses for civil celebrants at Box Hill TAFE.
- Dorothy Wright
- Ron McAlister
- Elizabeth Woodburn

## Queensland

- Angela Burns
- John Mayne

## Western Australia

- Laadan Fletcher
- Bill McKenzie
- Carol Astbury
- Cliff Harris.
- Maureen Bellett
- Edwin White

## New South Wales

- Jill Ellen Fuller, the first Celebrant appointment in New South Wales on 2 August 1973, was modelling and teaching at the June Dally-Watkins Model Agency and Department School. Nine months later she obtained a list from the Attorney- General's Department containing the names of the thirty authorized celebrants in Australia and extended an invitation to them to attend a meeting in Sydney to create *'The Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Australia'* (ACMCA) personally financing the association for the first year. Jill was elected, National President and Maureen Barron, Murphy's personal secretary, was appointed as National Secretary and later succeeded by Dally Messenger.
- Maureen Barron

5 December 1973	Mr Victor Parsons VIC 3043
16 January 1974	Mr Wayne Nicoll NSW
18 January 1974	Ms <a href="#">Junie Morosi</a> , ACT
1 February 1974	According to Robert Smith, Peta Callaghan, 563 was Registered as a Celebrant in Tasmania
1 February 1974	Mrs Kathleen Venn TAS
10 February 1974	Mrs Angela Burns QLD
17 April 1974	Mrs Eileen Collins NSW
17 April 1974	Ms Pamela Williamson WA
18 April 1974	Mrs Dee Potter of Tasmania
27 <sup>th</sup> February 1974	Dally Messenger III, appointed by telegram.
18 April 1974	Dee Potter 605 in Tasmania
24 April 1974	Mrs Beryl Gregory , VIC
24 April 1974	Kath Buttriss (born Kathleen Lyle Cameron)
08 May 1974	Mrs Carol Astbury WA
12 May 1974	Ms Belinda Kendall- White
15 May 1974	Mrs Sue Vardon SA
	Mrs Barbara Parnell NSW
24 July 1974	Mrs June Wells QLD
	Ms Susan Yarrow QLD
27 July 1975	According to Robert Smith, <a href="#">Leslie Bassall 764</a> was registered as a Celebrant on the same day as he was appointed.
	Faith Bandler
25 August 1975	Lorraine Gawne, of Grong Grong, a little town of about 150 people in central Riverina was registered as a Marriage Celebrant. Given a three-digit A number, she believes she was the only Celebrant between Wagga and the South Australian Border.
26 May 1977	
17 December 1982	Maree Callaghan was appointed and believed that at 36 years, she was the youngest Celebrant at the time as most were over 65 years of age and complained: <i>"You are too young with too few experiences of life to be appointed"</i> .
1984	Keith Lammond, lodged his application for registration as a Civil Celebrant and waited 10 years for approval

# H THE HISTORY OF CIVIL HISTORY CELEBRANTS




## Jill-Ellen Fuller

In 1973, **Jill-Ellen Fuller**, was modelling and teaching at the June Dally-Watkins Model Agency and Department School. You will find er mentioned in some of the articles and we are revisiting a previous newsletter to mention that when she was appointed as **the first Celebrant in New South Wales**. Just nine months after her appointment, she obtained a list of the thirty authorized celebrants in Australia, from the Attorney-General’s Department containing the names of and extended an invitation to them to attend a meeting in Sydney to create *‘The Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Australia’* (ACMCA) personally financing the association for the first year. Jill was elected, National President and Maureen Barron, Murphy’s personal secretary, was appointed as National Secretary and later succeeded by Dally Messenger.

In an age before the internet, online forums and social media, state and regional associations soon developed and on the 6 November 2008, at its Annual General Meeting, *‘The Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Australia’* (ACMCA) changed its name to *Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc* (AMC).


Jill-Ellen Fuller, is not currently registered as a Celebrant

**“There’s no such thing as writer’s block. As long as your fingers can move over the keyboard, eventually it’ll segue into something.”**



Author Mary Kay Andrews (Kathy Hogan Trocheck )

## Quotes to Inspire





*“I know that I love what I do. Let’s always Celebrate Celebrancy”.*

Lou Szymkow

*“Dare to be different”.*

Phil Timbrell


**In a ceremony, always speak slowly, two words every minute, to give power to your speech, and if you forget a word, no one will know as the pause gives you time to find a replacement word.**

Robert Smith



**When I look back, it is with great acknowledgement and thanks for the ceremonies I attended from when I was a child**

Robyn Foster



*“I am Unique. I am me, and there is no other me”.*

Leanne McKay

### VOCABULARY WORDS

#### WORD OF THE WEEK

**Sky-clad:** coming from a Sanskrit translation, it is an adjective used mainly in connection with Pagan ceremonies and simply means ‘naked’. Some believing that the wearing of clothing diminishes the power and connection being sought form surroundings





# H HISTORY

## THE HISTORY OF CIVIL CELEBRANTS

### Robert Smith



By September 2022 NSW Fireman, **Robert Smith** QFSM, CMC, JP. Was the 5<sup>th</sup> longest serving celebrant in Australia but the longest serving in NSW, having been appointed as the 273<sup>rd</sup> Celebrant on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1975.

According to Robert, after his appointment he joined about 20 celebrants meeting at the Greek Theatre in Darlinghurst in an unregistered group Civil Marriage Celebrants of NSW & ACT, created by Kath Buttriss. When interviewed by phone on 30/8/2022, Robert recalled that upon appointment:

- only 7 days' notice was required before marriage.
- permitted to charge \$20.00 per wedding however should the travel distance be more than 30km radius, an agreement could be made between the celebrant and the bridal couple.
- All official paperwork to enable conduct of a marriage ceremony, other than the purchase of the official Marriage Certificate from the BDM,
- The BDM posted to each Celebrant, a list of the total number of ceremony the Celebrant had conducted, to ensure the register was up to date.

There was a limit on appointments of celebrants it depended on the community demand. Robert only charged a fee for his Celebrancy services to those who could afford it and this led to complaints from other celebrants, and a telephone call was received from the Attorney General's office reprimanding him for doing so, insisting that he if he continued to not charge for his services, he would be deregistered. Robert said he then commenced charging for all ceremonies but donated fees to various charities.

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

On 2nd December 1993, discontent with the management of the Civil Marriage Celebrants of NSW & ACT group still operated by Kath Buttriss, Robert Smith and fellow celebrant Tom Nash took decisive action by registering two associations. The first registered association was the: 'Association of City of Sydney & Suburbs' That same day,

they then registered the '*Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of NSW & ACT Incorporated*', under registration number Y1861513 and in so doing, obstructed Kath Buttriss from further using that name. John O'Carrigan, and Robert Smith then took office to operate the newly registered associations. Robert, John O'Carrigan and Tom Nash were subsequently both bestowed Life Membership of the Association of Civil Celebrants of NSW & ACT Incorporated, and were also bestowed with Patron for Life honours.

During 1993, according to Robert, it was John Smith from Perth, Ashley Berg from Queensland and himself from New South Wales who founded the National Council of Celebrants Associations which was to become the peak body of Celebrancy Associations conferring with the Attorney Generals Department. The National Council of Celebrants Associations later became [Coalition of Celebrant Associations \(CoCA\)](#). In 1996, Robert sat on an advisory panel along with Barbara Bell (see pages 37-39) to assist the NSW BDM to create Lifelink, the online registration system that set a standard for other states to follow.

In February 2000 Robert was elected President of the Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants N.S.W. & ACT Inc. and held that position of four years until he retired from office. In October 2001, the title of Fellow Member was bestowed upon Robert by Dr. Laura Ethridge who at that time operated a Training College in Melbourne.

*The Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants N.S.W. & ACT Inc.* appointed Robert Smith as a '*Patron for Life*', 2009 and he held the role of that Association's Education Officer.

.In July 2022 Robert officiated at his granddaughter's wedding in Sydney. He and 11 others were diagnosed with Covid resulting in his hospitalisation with Covid and shingles but he fortunately recovered. Robert continues his admirable work as a Celebrant and on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2025, will celebrate 50 years as a Celebrant. He is now is 88 years of age, has been married to Pam for 66 years and is undergoing treatment for cancer. In consideration of his poor health, he has applied for an exemption from fees for 2023 and is awaiting a response.

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

In a phone conversation on 26/11/2023, he laughed "*If you don't have a positive outlook in life, life is terrible but be positive and life is wonderful.*"

He humbly added that we are all replaceable and that if you put your hand into a bucket of water, when you take your hand out, you will see the hole you've left behind will already be filled.



# THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Dally Messenger III



International College of Celebrancy  
www.iccdiplomas.com  
dallymessenger@mac.com  
0411 717 303

Dally, believes in the power of ceremony to improve people's lives and their personal happiness.

A former Catholic Priest, and then high school teacher for seven years, he was appointed as a Civil Marriage Celebrant on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1974 by Lionel Murphy himself.

Dally was not only appointed and

inspired by Lionel Murphy but saw him as a mentor.

Well before that, Dally had been the very first person to apply to become a celebrant under the Marriage Act 1961, but was rejected by the then AG, Sir Garfield Barwick and it was years later that Dally received Lionel Murphy's letter of appointment after his 'missing' file had been dug out of the woodwork upon Murphy's insistence.

There was no training available for celebrants and the Certificate IV in Celebrancy was not even in the planning stages. Dally however created ceremonies that were deeply personal. Rehearsals were not common but as ceremonies gained more quality inclusions, they started to become necessary, especially with large numbers of attendees.

Dally did not know what was ahead of him as it was still an unknown field and no one seemed to have a clear idea of the future. He explained that he however did have knowledge of the humiliation experienced by non-religious people who endured an indignity in marriage ceremonies at registries up to that point.



His very first ceremony as Civil Celebrant was in Dandenong Park, a suburb of Melbourne, in about April 1974. It was joyful occasion, particularly as the participants did not have to go to a registry office.

He wears an academic gown upon request and finds the best use of PA equipment is for groups of over 50 people.

Dally employed an assistant for many years to supervise the PA, manage music and help organise the processional and recessional at ceremonies.

Dally prefers funerals to other ceremonies but has conducted over 6000 ceremonies, including weddings, some in Italian, namings, birthday celebrations and a range

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of different celebrations. His most successful means of securing bookings is via personal recommendation.

Ceremonies have been conducted in hot air balloons, on a ferry on Sydney Harbour, on a boat on the Yarra, on a mountain top, on a beach at dawn but he thinks he may remember a few more over a couple of glasses of red.

He remembers with fondness, a ceremony in the Fitzroy Gardens. The groom and his family and friends processed to music from one corner of the gardens while the bride and her family and friends from the other (diagonally).

They met in the middle near a lake where the bride and groom kept their distance

from one another until

Dally brought them

together for the vows and

then both groups came

together. Dally said that

in this ceremony, he truly

felt that he had joined

two people, two families,

and two groups of



friends, together.

He hopes that he is not unique in style or content but favours a rehearsal and believes in paying great attention to detail.

His describes his greatest challenge as a Celebrant to be maintaining quality with such low fees and such ultra competitiveness caused by the government appointing far too many celebrants, many without high ideals.

He has only ever refused one ceremony when the groom continually on insulting Dally without reason.

he was one of a group who founded the International College of Celebrancy in Australia but has also taught celebrancy in America, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. He was instrumental in establishing the two

Continued next page.....





## THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY-

### CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

University courses at Victoria University and later Monash University. In Australia

Lionel Murphy appointed Dally as the Secretary of ACMCA (1974) was Murphy created the body in 1974 and has been in office in the FCAA (funerals) 1976. ACMCV after the breakup of the ACMCA (1978), AFCC (1994-2000), and Graduates of the ICC, he was actually one of the founder of the AFCC which on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2000, held a large-attendance testimonial dinner in appreciation of Dally, in Melbourne. At that event they gifted him a trip to the USA for a month to study the work of the famous David Oldfield and presented Dally with a glass plaque at the 50th anniversary dinner in Canberra for his services to celebrancy.

When considering the current Celebrant's Program, Dally has many ideas for change including:

- Introducing a selection process that ensures applicants believe in the power of ceremony and what good ceremonies do for people.
- Create guidelines on fees.
- Scrap the Certificate IV in Celebrancy and replace it with a course of preparation approved by a committee of celebrants supported by the AG.

He has authored a number of books on Celebrancy including:

- Murphy's Law And The Pursuit Of Happiness: A History Of The Civil Celebrant Movement
- Ceremonies & Celebrations - a handbook of secular ceremonies and much more.

It's Your Wedding - Five different wedding ceremonies.

As the Principal of The International College Of Celebrancy, he also wrote Courses Of Study covering:

1. The Nature of ceremony
2. The practical skills of being a Celebrant
3. Wedding celebrancy in practice
4. Funeral celebrancy in practice
5. General Celebrancy - the wide range of secular ceremonies.
6. The business side of celebrancy.
7. The history of celebrancy
8. Secular spirituality for Celebrants.

He has mentored a countless number of Celebrants over the 50 years, particularly as the Principal of the international College of Celebrancy

Over the years he has received two life Memberships in Associations but to Celebrated this 50th anniversary of Celebrancy, Dally attended 4 major events, including the AMC Conference as Guest Speaker, and has written two articles.

Dally is now mostly retired and performs only the occasional ceremony near the Melbourne CBD

The greatest accolade he believes he has received were from clients who told him - "That was the best wedding I have ever attended."



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

Lou Szymkow

**The greatest accolades I have ever received was from clients who said: "That was the best wedding I have ever attended."**



Dally Messenger III



# THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Robyn Foster



Celebrations by Robyn (Wollongong)  
[www.celebrationsbyrobyn.com.au](http://www.celebrationsbyrobyn.com.au)  
[robyn@celebrationsbyrobyn.com.au](mailto:robyn@celebrationsbyrobyn.com.au)  
 0412 503 935

A month after the first Celebrant was authorised in 1973, I gave birth to my daughter. By that time I had been working full-time in administrative roles and also helping my lovely Mum with the beautiful wedding dresses she made, as well as for the Mothers of Bride & Groom, the bridesmaids and all. I often attached veils to the headpiece and this led me to take a year-long course in Millinery. Being involved in weddings at that time, gave me an awareness of the early days of civil celebrancy in the Illawarra.

However, it was difficult to become a Celebrant then with a restriction on numbers in each district (oh, wouldn't that be nice to have now?!) I know that Barbara Dent, a long-time Illawarra Celebrant took about 8 years to gain her Authorisation – in 1984 – by finally approaching the AG Department in person. What a difference from then to now. Even so I remained interested in celebrancy through and had thought about applying, however my Mum (who had a disability from polio she endured at age 3) was suffering with various medical issues and died in 1988. I helped finish her last wedding dress and completely made the veil and headdress. Strangely, I put aside any ideas of celebrancy and did not touch a sewing machine for two years. By 1992 I was divorced and didn't think that it would be okay to be a 'divorced' celebrant so again, put the idea aside.

By 2002, changes were coming to the way that Celebrants were to do their ceremonies and in 2004 John Howard made his statements about a family being Mum, Dad and two children. and had the words changed in the Marriage Act to a 'man and a woman'. I had gone through my school years with two people who were always 'different as was often said', but great mates to me and by then we all knew both weren't 'different' they were who they were and I still see them.

Well my Dad had died at Christmas 2000 and from 1992 until then, my family was me, my Dad and two children, and after that just me and my two children, who by then were 27 and 25 and with their own partners; my daughter with her female partner and my son with his female partner.

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By 2005 my annoyance with John Howard's statements and changes in attitude to divorce by those around me, started me rethinking celebrancy. I was also working out when to retire in the years ahead and discussing this with a cousin who is nearly 14 years younger than me and he blurted out "you should be a celebrant". He had not known of my interest in this for all the years before.

So I checked out the training groups (very few then but all face-to-face thankfully) and registered with one I could attend on several weekends in Sydney. It was a Statement of Attainment then, but with a TAFE Diploma in Management & Leadership and being on various school and hockey association committees over the years, as well as being a JP and my permanent employment, I felt my background was a great support. There were 15 in my group and we helped each other especially with the 'pretend' ceremonies of all kinds – and that alone was great training. To have 15 different ceremonies performed over a weekend with appropriate criticism was a great start. I am still in touch with Denise Tart from that class.

I lodged my application with the AG Department and was accepted in September 2006, but as was the case at the time I had to wait 2 years until September 2008 for my authorisation (discriminately only twelve months for those in the cities). I might add that in October 2008 the AG stopped the waiting time and since then celebrants are authorised when all their paperwork etc., has been approved – what is a few months now compared to the two years for me and eight years for those years before.

While waiting I joined the AMC as a student. The Late Keith Lammond was President and he was offering separate training in Funerals and Namings, and also for Pet Funerals under the name of AMC complete with amazing large folders full of information, ceremonies, poems, etc. I paid for and took each of his courses and his training was 'top notch'. It was during the Funeral training course that I 'found my niche'. An old friend of my family – ex WW2 vet and tough as nails – always kept in touch and of course knew about my training and trusted me by leaving a note with his son that I was 'to do' his funeral. So in March 2007 that was my first funeral and was held at Pine Grove Crematorium in Sydney.

By the time I was authorised to be a celebrant, I was well and truly on my funeral journey. Since then I have celebrated more funerals than weddings (about 60:40) and have loved helping families through that day. Their histories have been wonderful to learn and help write or speak for them with the tributes. There are, of course, the extreme differences: the stillborn babies, children, a lady of 102, deaths from drugs and the sad suicides. The families all need our care, understanding and help.



# H THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

From 1973 to July 2007 I had been working at the University of Wollongong – the last years as an Administrative Officer to the Dean in the Faculty of Arts. I had started studying part-time for my BA degree in History 2004 but with all the effort I was putting into becoming a Celebrant I withdrew. I retired from the Uni in July 2007 (after starting on my funeral celebrant journey). On receiving my authorisation as a marriage celebrant, I put all my time into that with a few Expos which helped at the time and advertising in newspapers. Who would have thought then that Facebook et al, would be so much the way for telling the public of our abilities in 2023? With my celebrancy now well under way, I decided to recommence my degree and graduated with a BA in History with Distinction in July 2012.

When I look back, it is with great acknowledgement and thanks for the ceremonies I attended from when I was a child – mostly weddings and namings, until my first funeral at age 14 for a Great Aunt. Most were in the Anglican or Methodist Church and were with lovely ceremonies, and I was afforded the privilege of being a Godmother to a friend’s little boy at a Catholic Church in 1972.

My Dad’s Army Battalion had a wonderful Padre who joined them in New Guinea and stayed with them until return to Sydney. He was a wonderful character who kept a large contingent of those men and families together with Christenings (I was one), weddings and an annual memorial service for the Btn – all done with great feeling in his ceremonies. I still offer a small ceremony of tribute for the families of this Btn each Anzac Day at the Sydney Cenotaph (with approval from NSWRSI).

Because of all that I really believe in ceremony first – celebration next. That doesn’t mean they should be separated, but the ‘ceremony’ helps to give beautiful meaning for the particular moment.

I have really enjoyed meeting so many celebrants through AMC, AFCC and The Celebrants Network. I attended



conferences with all three and helped organise several conferences for the latter from 2015. In fact it was at such a conference in Sydney that I sat and had coffee with Lou and got to know him more. My

recommendation to all celebrants – especially in their early years – is to go to as many of these as possible. Although, attending The Celebrants Network conference July this year in Victoria to celebrate 50 years was great (and I had also been at their celebration for 40 years with Dally and several other early Celebrants in attendance – also in Victoria).

To help other celebrants with enquiries has been

enjoyable, but I think a privilege that they have respected my knowledge and asked. In return I have also contacted other celebrants when a blank wall jumps up – and I thank Lou for a lot of his help. I was brought up to be in a Union if a worker, which I did, but translated this over to belonging to an Association as a celebrant and encourage everyone to also join an association. The contacts and help are an invaluable source of knowledge. Of course my story wouldn’t be complete without a note about Marriage Equality. Through my engagement with other Celebrants I was able to get a group together for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 to be in the Sydney Mardi Gras with a float “Celebrants for Marriage Equality”. I am still so thankful to those who came with me to help get that through and acknowledge the need for Marriage Equality.

At 76 years of age with 16 of those years as a Funeral Celebrant and 15 years as a Marriage Celebrant – they



have been fabulous years. I am taking less bookings now and considering when to stop and that is the question I ponder over. I never intended being ‘full-time’ which is quite difficult to do, but

with 917 ceremonies completed I am happy with that.

One of Lou’s questions was “which of your ceremonies do you favourably remember”. So many, but there was a Naming for a 6 month old Newfoundland dog! attended by other owners and their four-legged children; a beautiful Hindu wedding with about 400 guests – they made me feel so very special; a small wedding with just parents before they flew off for their large Indian ‘wedding’; a funeral for a husband and wife who died one day apart; and many more.

Best wishes to new and long-term celebrants – just keep the ceremony in the celebration!





# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Paul Guy



Capturing a snapshot in 2023, the 50th year of the Civil Celebrant's Program, through the stories of current and past celebrants were invited to tell their story so that in 10, 20, or 50 others will know the personal history of Celebrancy in Australia.

Paul Guy JP  
Civil Marriage Celebrant & Funeral Celebrant  
Mobile 0417133599  
Email: [Paul@yesido.net.au](mailto:Paul@yesido.net.au)  
[www.yesido.net.au](http://www.yesido.net.au)



<https://www.facebook.com/Yesido.PaulGuy.MarriageCelebrant>

Paul Guy is a full time Marriage Celebrant and Funeral Celebrant who volunteers on the AMC Committee. He answers the AMC Help Line and is the AMC Regional Co-Ordinator for the Illawarra.

He finds being a Funeral Celebrant particularly rewarding; being able to help family and friends with a special service celebrating a person's life no matter how young or old; and is also an independent funeral director and

Based in Wilton NSW, he performs ceremonies across Sydney, Wollongong, the Southern Highlands, Blue Mountains and the Macarthur Area and says he has a passion to create the ceremony of your dreams whether it is for a Wedding, Renewal of Vows, Commitment Ceremony, Baby Naming, Funeral Service, Memorial Service or a Pet Farewell.

Paul was the Restaurant Manager and Function Coordinator for Picton Village Motel and Restaurant Manager in the past for The Jolly Knight Seafood Restaurant at Casula, NSW. He has held many other exciting positions in the Hospitality Industry including the Executive Chef at Eschol Park House. He has a Trade Certificate in Commercial Catering, Diploma in Tourism & Hospitality Management, and of course the Certificate IV in Celebrancy. He has an alter ego at Christmas when he dons a red suite for a charity and he also a carer for his mother. Paul believes it is both an honour and a privilege to be able to work with people to create a ceremony unique

and meaningful that will reflect their beliefs, values and dreams for their special day. He has a seeks to exceed client expectations.







# THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Leanne McKay

Tears of Joy Weddings and Celebrations

[Tearsofjoyweddings@gmail.com](mailto:Tearsofjoyweddings@gmail.com)

0438564217

**Leanne McKay** is based in Wollongong NSW and is the AMC Wollongong Regional Coordinator. worked for a Global meditation company, and in Early Childhood and before that had mentored teenagers in school.

She was inspired by the equality legislation in 2017 and decided then that she had to be a part of the excitement. She described the process as arduous having to complete the Certificate IV in Celebrancy online over an 18 month period, during which time she moved to Western Australia while Covid impacted on everything. She was finally authorised as a Marriage Celebrant 22nd September 2020 and immediately joined the AMC. In 2023 Leanne joined the AMC Executive Committee and is the Conference Coordinator. She is also a Regional Coordinator for AMC.

Her application to the MLCS took about 3 months before final approval. She was also inspired by the work conducted by Allison Collins and Lorraine Lehman-Jones but had no specific business plan at the time but wanted just to be an avenue to bring pure joy to and for others. She described herself as “romance personified”, and said “I love love”.

She tailors her Weddings to suit every couple, and describes that as ‘bespoke’, spending countless hours to help make the couple comfortable, confident and in control of their day. Her previous occupations had given her the life listening skills, the ability to nurture and mentor and to and write creatively. She sees herself as offering a calming influence.

Leanne sees being a Mum, Grandmother, and Mum-in-law as very positive assets, but says her biggest asset is being married to her soul mate since 1985 after meeting as young teenagers.

Her first ceremony was on the Chinese Luna New Year of Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021

She found it nerve wracking complete with dry mouth, anxiety and breathlessness - the works. The couple included a tie-the-knot ceremony and beautiful poetry. It was sublime.

Leanne loves the Southern Highlands but adores weddings on the beach with bare feet, simple vows as much AS she loves the excitement of elopements.

Her kit includes her Mary Poppins glitter bag and says that “People love it”

She tends to wear one of a few outfits, however always asks her couples what they would like her to wear and what colours to avoid.



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She confidently states *“I am Unique. I am me, and there is no other me”*.

She loves to listen to the love stories and ideas from her couples and writes in draft form until she achieves perfection. She says that she is relaxed, but professional, she listens and is intuitive.

She adores being a celebrant and being able to make a difference.

Leanne herself was married in a Catholic Church in 1985 by Father Whiteman, a Priest, way ahead of his time. He sang, was open to the Bride walking down the aisle to Annie’s song by John Denver and included ideas that many Priests in 2023, still don’t allow. She thought herself lucky to have found him his influence inspired her to give couples the best experience.

Leanne has a personal connection to cultural rituals. She is happy to bring Aboriginal rituals into ceremonies. She is delighted when her couples want to acknowledge Country but better still, hold a smoking ceremony and have an Elder perform a Welcome to Country.

She Love, love, loves Yidaki ( Didgeridoo) too.

Having performed around 104 ceremonies, her favourite is Weddings hands down. She markets on Easy Weddings where she has a 5 Star rating, and the Under 15k Beautiful Weddings Australia group on Facebook but finds Word of Mouth is brilliant too.

Her favourite memories are having ‘Flowermen’ handing out celebratory drinks, whilst tossing flowers, and an Elopement where the witnesses spontaneously broke into a traditional Fijian hymn as the couple kissed to create one of the most emotional moments ever for the couple, and herself. She said “It was magical”.

Leanne finds her greatest challenge as a Celebrant is the paperwork.

She has only ever refused a ceremony because of prior bookings but recalled that during Covid lockdowns, she lost three ceremonies in a week.

She now mentors others, both directly and indirectly by answering questions via social media including the AMC Private Members Forum on Facebook, without judgement.



She plans to eventually author a book or more, on Celebrancy but celebrated this 50 Year of the Celebrants Program by being a driving force in the AMC Conference as well as sharing the news with couples about this special year in which they have been married.





# THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Kathy Dodd

Kathy Dodd Celebrant

[www.facebook.com/kathydoddcelebrant](https://www.facebook.com/kathydoddcelebrant)

[kathydoddcelebrant@gmail.com](mailto:kathydoddcelebrant@gmail.com)

0408788191

**Kathy Dodd** was Authorised as a Marriage Celebrant on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016 and is an AMC member. She had first considered the step in 2009 after a good friend came out with the idea suggested she would make a great marriage celebrant but there were restrictions on numbers prior back then and Kathy thought it not practical at the time. She has always thought though, that her personality was suited to being a Celebrant. She continued working full time in Human Resources and career coaching, which had been her own career since 1994, until she could semi retire and devote more time to Celebrancy as she has always loved celebrating couples becoming married.

She started an online course with Rose Training but moved to a face to face course at their Training offices in Brisbane. Kathy found that the owner of Rose Training was truly amazing as she was always available after training to offer guidance and then Kathy met the amazing Gwen Inglis who continued to be her mentor for years to come and they continue a close friendship to this day. Whilst Kathy didn't find any difficulties in her training, she thought the whole process was far more involved than she had imagined, however once she applied, her Authorisation was finalised within 2 weeks.

Her motto is 'Creating Memories' and that is what she aims to do, ensuring the ceremony is romantic and fun. She includes their Love Story to enhance the ceremony. She refers to Celebrancy as her "Love Job" as it is not her main source of income. She was interviewed by Louise Phelan, Boost Your Career about her HR and business consultancy career. <https://lnkd.in/gHxPxtCj>

Kathy says that every single part of her role as a HR professional has given her the skills to become a successful Celebrant. She describes herself as the type of person who is intuitive and can read people very quickly and adapt to their style and personalities. She sees herself as an expert at guiding ideas that couples may have to design a perfect ceremony to suit their requirements.

She was married in a church by a Minister of Religion, who was a dear friend, in 1971 after being involved in that church all of her life. It was a beautiful wedding and she a very happy day that she can remember in detail. The Minister listened to her ideas and included very modern wording and music for that era. There were no 'obeying' words!!!!

Kathy thought herself as a bit of a breaker of glass ceilings as a young woman. She also recalls her own very first ceremony was performed in May 2016 at Macarthur Wedding Gardens, Alexander Hills, Brisbane. The lead up was quite stressful as she was marrying a dear friend so wanted it to be perfect. Kathy and her husband were also guests at the wedding and her husband took the



photographs. It turned out to be perfect in every way and they celebrate the anniversary each year.

Kathy now works all over Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast but likes to be

in a venue that has a Plan B for weather condition changes if possible. Her favourite venue is the little Rotary Wedding Chapel in Southport, Gold Coast.

She provides a PA System, Signing table, chairs and white cloth if required and has a lovely fine black pens for signing in Gold, Rose Gold or Silver depending on colour scheme of the wedding.

She has a "Wedding Wardrobe" of various colours to suit the ceremony colours.

She is a very happy person who can instantly build relationships and people warm to her immediately.

She believes that her life and experiences help her couples enjoy the perfect ceremony and has now performed about 36 weddings and one renewal of vows.

She procures booking through recommendations from friends and couples she has married, as well as via Facebook page and the AMC directory.

The funniest and most unusual ceremony involved a couple who had their chickens wearing bow ties and attending as guests. The chickens though were not cooperative and the groom had to chase them around the garden before the ceremony could begin!!!

It was exciting when the Premier of Queensland was a bridesmaid at another but her favourite ceremony was when for her own daughter which was very special and . All of their 6 children from their previous marriages, were in the wedding party. It was very memorable.

Kathy has only ever had one awkward enquiry when she was approached by an overseas bride who had presumed that she only needed to marry an Australian to become an Australian citizen. presuming she could become an Australian citizen upon marrying a local. Kathy did not feel comfortable and so recommended the couple see a Migration Agent before they made any plans. They didn't come back.

Kathy took great pleasure in Mentoring a new Celebrant, Pat Greaves, assisting her during her studies and beyond.

Kathy joined the Executive Committee of the AMC in 2023 as Policies and Procedures Officer. She would like to see more training for Celebrants, especially in different rituals and much more emphasis on how to set up a Celebrancy practice. She would also like to see more Celebrants meeting together to exchange ideas and experiences. She missed the AMC Conference and so Celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Civil Celebrancy at a private lunch with Gwen Inglis and they raised a glass in a toast of Celebration.







# THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Jeff Hindmarsh



jbjcelebrant@gmail.com; [joinedbyjeff](http://www.marriagecelebrantdjm.com.au/)  
<http://www.marriagecelebrantdjm.com.au/>  
0499 093 476

**Jeff Hindmarsh** is based on the NSW Central Coast and is one of the most innovative and busiest Celebrants in the state.

He started as DJ and watched Ceremonies being performed to a varying standard and in typical Jeff fashion, thought "I could do that" and away he went securing a qualification and then Authorisation.



With his DJ business, his wife being a florist, Jeff already had extensive connections but also considerable social media skill and a great deal of persistence.

He soon had so many bookings that he had to outsource his script writing to his Dad but still burns the midnight oil, typically rising at 4am or 5am for a full day.

He has now taken part in over 2000 ceremonies and sees weddings as a monumental and personal journey in life. He is a modern, vibrant Celebrant, DJ & MC full of life & with a wicked sense of humour. He aims to deliver an experience that couples and their guests will fondly remember as being stylish, smooth flowing, personal and of course a lots of fun filled with warmth, connection and authentic realism.

He travels extensively with weddings in regional and coastal areas across the state and occasionally interstate.



You'll find him on all social media platforms but you may heard him on his Wedding Day radio shows, or seen him on TV conducting a ceremony at a KFC in Broken Hill; or when he set up a 'drive-through' ceremony option

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during Covid, where a month after lodging their NOIM, couples could arrive at a chosen location, stay in their limousine and have Jeff perform a legals only ceremony on the spot. The drive-through weddings helped local limousine drivers stay in business and helped couples tie the knot within Covid restrictions.

In his hundreds of ceremonies, he has only ever refused to perform one wedding when the entire wedding party were obviously intoxicated upon his arrival. Jeff had been booked as both Celebrant and as DJ but the group were so unruly that he had no option but to pack up and leave, much to the disdain of the intoxicated couple, who under his very firm contract, were still obligated to pay the full fee.

He was eventually approached by a funeral director who was impressed with his body of work and so now Jeff has added regular funerals to his already extensive repertoire.



Not completely satisfied with a wedding Expo he attended; Jeff created his own helping other celebrants and vendors get more exposure, and promotes other Celebrants when is overbooked.

Recently he was the MC/DJ for the ABIA Awards but just missed out on securing more first place awards.

Jeff will continue to explore innovation and provide energy to all his ceremonies.



"A Ceremony that is stylish, smooth flowing, personal and of course with lots of fun, filled with warmth, connection and authentic realism. ***I Can do that***".  
Jeff Hindmarsh



# THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Craig Moran

Ph 0417 584 156, [craig@craigcelebrant.com](mailto:craig@craigcelebrant.com)

Craig Moran was authorised as a Marriage Celebrant in April 1995 after another Celebrant saw him MC a reception and suggested that he would find it fun and interesting. He remembers that back then, applications were paper based and had to be mailed in. Email was relatively new and the Certificate IV in Celebrancy had not yet been introduced, hence he began without training but was determined to provide personalised, sincere ceremonies



with a few lighter moments.

In 1995, there was a restriction (cap) on the number of celebrants per Federal Electorate, so there was a waiting period. Upon lodging his application, he was told that it would be 4 years before his electorate would be looked at again, but then a few months later he was contacted again by the AG's Dept asking if he was still interested, and then was appointed. It was a sideline for Craig and a bit of fun.

Craig was a corporate executive in the computer industry and continued in that role for another 8 or 9 years ago, before adopting celebrancy full time, applying his sales, marketing, public speaking, presentation skills, and writing skills to best effort.

His first ceremony was in 1996 in a park at Hornsby for a work colleague. Craig described it as being 'nice' but that in hindsight, he felt it was probably a pretty basic "vanilla-flavoured" ceremony.

His second was in a park at Little Manly beach for a life-long friend and his third was a random booking from a free Yellow Pages phone book listing. Celebrants were obliged at that time to put a listing in the YP.

Though based in Sydney, he does not have a preferred region and is happy to travel, taking his trusty PA with him. While most ceremonies are in greater Sydney – he also officiates down south (Wollongong & Shoalhaven) and quite often in the Southern Highlands. He has also officiated in the far west of NSW, Brisbane, Airlie Beach and on Lord Howe Island.

Craig believes that what sets him apart from other celebrants and earns him great testimonials is the time & effort he puts in to capture each couple's relationship within the context of the ceremony".

He prefers funerals and weddings and is not really fussed about Naming Ceremonies.

When asked if he speaks any other languages, he

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responded that he "*speaks shorthand when drunk*"

Craig has performed over a 1,000 wedding and several thousand funerals. Most of his business is procured via word of mouth, the AMC website and occasionally via Easy Weddings. Just last Saturday,

at a wedding in inner Sydney, there were 5 other couples in attendance who Craig had married, as well as an upcoming couple.

In terms of memorable weddings, one he recalls with astonishment is a spectacular wedding on Sydney Harbour that cost \$180,000. Others were a couple of surprise weddings where the guests were blown away with the occasion. One was a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party and the other an engagement party – these weddings still stand out in his mind, in every detail.

Craig has never had to refuse a ceremony, but had been concerned about one pending ceremony when he discovered that the bride's doctor could not confirm that the bride was capable of giving full consent. Sadly, the bride sadly passed away during the planning process, so Craig feels that he may have dodged a difficult situation. He was on the AMC executive for about 9 years beginning in 2013 including stints as Treasurer and AMC President.

He may retire in a couple of years because whilst he is happy to mentor other Celebrants, he believes that there are far too many at present, and there is an overcrowded marketplace inhibiting business growth for newer Celebrants. He might spend more time on the golf course and traveling.

Craig suggests that the Federal Attorney's Department struggles to properly run the Marriage Celebrants program, as it is administered by public servants who have never been celebrants whereas in other professions, the associations and governing bodies such as the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Australian Chartered Accounts Assoc (ACAA), and Pharmacy Guild, are run by professionals from their own industries.

He is now considering writing a book for Celebrants but has not yet put pen to paper, although he has presented at AMC Conferences over the years and has been a guest speaker at various events.

As for awards, Craig says that he has voted himself best celebrant in his street & in his family.

It was a close vote





# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Karen Ambrose

With decades of experience in the Dance industry, Karen Ambrose found the transition to being a celebrant in 2010 an easy one! Her dancing and teaching career had given her the confidence and know-how to deal with creative people, organize programmes and engaging "audiences" of all sizes". She promises her couples that their ceremony will be choreographed and rehearsed for a seamless 'performance' on the day while adhering to the legal requirements.



Living and working in the Shoalhaven, just outside of Nowra, she is an AMC member and uses the business name of Designed Ceremonies.



Her celebrancy training 14 years ago was face to face, in a classroom. Karen encountered a delay in securing her authorisation on a technicality as her first references didn't meet the criteria and

had to be reissued. Hence the process took three months and she was successfully appointed on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2010.

She still teaches dance and sometimes incorporates those skills assisting couples prepare for their reception, especially for local couples who are able to attend lessons regularly.

Her first ceremony was just two months after authorisation and despite the couple being her dance pupils whom she knew well, her leg was shaking right the way through!!

Karen conducts some of her ceremonies at her home but wherever



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she goes, she always has her signing table with fitted covering and her PA.... and her larger ceremonies are assisted by her husband/roadie.

Her favoured ceremonies are Weddings and funerals, procuring bookings via her Website [www.designedceremonies.com](http://www.designedceremonies.com) and her Facebook page.

Karen attended the AFCC Conference in Canberra but was unable to attend the AMC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference this year.

On the downside, Karen believes that we currently have too many Celebrants as the numbers inhibits growth of existing Celebrancy businesses and that if there was a cap on numbers, all Celebrants could thrive.

Karen believes that dancing is like your feet are dreaming.



*"Dancing is like your feet are dreaming".*  
Karen Ambrose



# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Barbara Bell



The editor, hearing that Barbara Bell was retiring after 20 years as a Celebrant, had the privilege of visiting her after the AMC Conference. We chatted for a couple of hours over coffee.

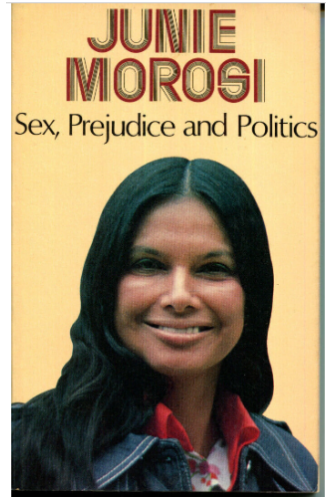
This wonderfully talented person graduated from a counselling degree and case management in 1996 and has numerous qualifications including BA Dip Psch, Dip Ed, Diploma in Counselling, has studied grief, hypnosis and more. She has taught in a high schools and has held about 35 different jobs in her lifetime but as a Celebrant, she has performed countless ceremonies, written training courses for Celebrants, taught and mentored a large number of Celebrants and was for a time, the President of a well-respected Celebrancy association. Having been a Celebrant for so long, she of course is well acquainted with Robert Smith who had been featured in a previous edition and again in this edition, as well as Dally Messenger III, whom she met in Melbourne some years ago. Her recent poor health has slowed her down but she has authored her own biography and currently writes a newsletter for PROBUS.

Apart from generously submitting her article, She has also generously handed over some books from her extensive library for the South Coast Christmas gathering which she hopes to attend

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### ARTICLE BY BARBARA BELL

In 1974 I saw In the Daily Telegraph newspaper a photograph of well-known public figure Junie Morosi, sitting on a fence looking very glamorous and in my naivety I was quite impressed. She had just been appointed on 18th January 1974 as a marriage celebrant and I thought that I would like to be one as well. So I contacted the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department in Canberra to find out what the criteria was in order to become a celebrant.



Appointments were not freely given out in 1974, and it seemed that it wasn't what you knew or could do, but who you knew. In actuality, I don't think there was any real criterion as it was a new venture and celebrancy was in its infancy.

Celebrancy had its roots extending back to 1961, when the then Federal Attorney General, Sir Garfield Barwick, was in power. He achieved unification of the laws regarding marriage throughout the Commonwealth of Australia with the reform of the Marriage Act. The Marriage Act, 1961. contained a small sentence in section 39. (3)(2)(a)

*"may authorise a person to solemnise marriage in any place in Australia, or only in the part or parts of Australia specified in the Instrument of Authorization"*

In 1971 with a change of government, Senator Lionel Murphy, became the new Federal Attorney General and in 1973, he initiated the Civil Marriage Celebrants Programme and a select number of persons were appointed to become civil celebrants. This programme gave couples freedom of choice with the right to choose, select and approve of the wording of the ceremony, choice of celebrant venue, symbols, music, time and place of the ceremony.

However at this time a number of dissenters claimed that celebrants were taking people away from the church and that a civil ceremony would weaken the institution of marriage. Rather than weaken the bonds of marriage, it has the opposite effect. It has strengthened the significance and reverence of the ceremony as couples could now choose wording that is relevant to them.



Continued next page.....



# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

Celebrancy has come a long way from its infancy and in 1996 the Federal Attorney General Department undertook an in-depth review of the 1961 Marriage Act. Celebrants and celebrant associations were invited to contribute their opinions and experiences. The review brought into focus a number of issues which needed reform. This led to the Marriage Amendment Bill 2002 whose aim was to raise the standard of celebrancy and celebrant services to a more professional level. Darryl Williams, the then Attorney General brought in the requirement that aspiring celebrants were now required to undertake training before they can be considered by the Attorney General's Department for approval and registration as a civil marriage celebrant. After receiving it, the registered celebrant must further their knowledge and experience by attending annually ongoing professional development. Celebrancy has grown from toddling humble beginnings in 1973 to the widely accepted practice of today.

After my very early attempts to become a celebrant and had to include a sample service with two applications and two rejections, suddenly in 1995 (20 years later) I received a letter from the Federal Attorney General asking me if I was still interested in becoming a celebrant. I applied and received a script with an official ceremony to use and the authority to charge the regulate fee of \$35. I was happy to accept this fee as I thought I was going to do ceremonies as a public service. What a difference to the fees are that are charged in 2023. Originally it was a lifetime appointment but that status was changed some years later. Celebrancy fees were deregulated in 1995 in response to strong representation from celebrants and it was at that time that the Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995 centralised registrations.

I have worked all over NSW and while most charged \$500 or \$600, and I was charging only \$350 in Oatley Park but thought people didn't realise that it was legal procedure that required an authorised celebrant and recalled that one client was a deaf mute who paid the translator \$600 and so more than the Celebrant. I have found that if you charge too little, people doubt your credibility but charge too much and they think you a rip-off.

In the early the years before the 2002 reform Celebrants were only appointed if the area in which they lived could support the number of ceremonies judged to be needed by the Attorney General's Department. When the reform came into effect that celebrants were to be trained I wrote three five-day courses,

“How to become a Civil Marriage Celebrant”

“How to become a Funeral Celebrant”

“How to become a Naming Celebrant”

These courses were presented to a number of Colleges in Sydney and the ACT and I can boast that I was successful in training some very highly proficient celebrants in that time.

I also taught Celebrants at Jannali Community College but my classes were never too serious. I laughed that I had

always told my son “*nobody likes a smartass*” but I turned into one.

At 72 years of age, I was a teacher for an RTO in Bruce in Canberra. I wrote a course for baby naming and for funeral celebrants and was paid \$3000 per course but had to pay for my own accommodation. I always required my students to perform mock ceremonies for assessment.

I have conducted hundreds of ceremonies, some of which have been beautiful and some not so good, but experience is a great teacher. I continue my Christian faith offering to include prayers in funeral when appropriate and still I pray though is not sure if God listens. I found that to secure funeral work, you must develop a positive relationship with a funeral director as most work is by word of mouth.

I do remember the first funeral I performed unaided for Mr Smith. I sent him off to eternity very badly and in about 10 minutes. I still wonder if he got there or is still waiting for an invitation from St Peter to open the Pearly gate.

Among my many weddings was a ceremony at Brighton Le Sands where the groom fainted and his mother slapped him on the back to admonish him. The Bride didn't want to carry her flowers and so I carried them for her but the bride also fainted and had to recuperate before the ceremony could continue.

My first ceremony for a same sex couple was at Prince Alfred Park. The two women had shaved heads, earrings at every possible point as well as numerous tattoos and so were not my usual clientele but they were very clearly in love and I could see the purity of their love in their eyes and so was very happy to perform the ceremony.

I performed a Ceremony on the on a boat in Sydney Harbour (pictured) for a couple who then sailed to Tasmania on the Boxing Day Weddings on boats were a bit dicey at times and on one occasion on Georges River an enormous storm came up. The guests, bridal couple and I rolled alarmingly sideways for the entire service The storm damaged the engine and the boat went round in circles for at least an hour before I could finally disembark, The guests sat down to eat but I was not offered a thing.

On another occasion I conducted a ceremony commencing from Cronulla and asked to be put off at



# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

GyMEA Wharf but the captain wanted to put me off at Lilli Pilli however there was no transport for me to get back to home. We eventually got to GyMEA and it was low tide and when I stepped upon the gunnel to climb high up onto the wharf the boat moved out and I was left with one foot on the gunnel and one foot on the wharf performing the splits just like in the movies. I finally scrambled to the top of the wharf and immediately put a foot down a hole in the wharf and I fell over to the delight of the many guests hanging over the rail.

I have performed a number of ceremonies for Australian grooms who married brides who were from Asian countries and required an interpreter and recall one couple who wanted the ceremony rushed so that the groom could get to the beer. That bride's gown had been purchased at a charity shop.

I have performed many beautiful ceremonies at Camelia Gardens and have included a photo from one.

At another wedding at Camelia Gardens though, I was ready to begin when the best man turned up in his underpants and sat on a fence in the waiting for the couple. They arrived, called the police, and he was arrested for being drunk and undressed in public. Oh! Happy day!

I have refused just two ceremonies in my career. The first was at a nursing home after interviewing the



bride who I saw was so overcome by dementia that she couldn't hold a pen. I spoke to a nurse to seek clarification of the woman's abilities and to the resident doctor who had initially approved of the wedding but then rescinded his approval after I questioned the bride's capacity. On another occasion, a groom arrived early but had obviously 'imbibed'. I insisted that I could not perform a solemnisation due to his intoxication and the groom was furious but I was determined to comply with the law and not perform a ceremony that might be invalid.

At my first Naming Ceremony I mispronounced Simon as 'Semen' and the child's Grandfather nearly fell over laughing. Performing Naming Ceremonies, I decided to create my own Register and so designed, printed and had bound a Naming Register which I have to this day.

For some years, I was the President of the Association of Civil Marriage Celebrant of NSW & ACT, which I could not have achieved without the great assistance of Robert Smith who helped me when I started. I organised conferences in Wollongong and used to prepare a

*"Every Celebrant should have a business degree".*

Barbara Bell

newsletter for the association. Meetings were held at the Bankstown Sports Club but eventually moved to the Wentworthville Club which I found was too far for me to travel.

The general public has held the opinion that a civil celebrant has an easy occupation to *"just stand and read out of a book and get paid for it"* and it is *"an easy way to earn some pin money when you retire"*. How wrong this is. Celebrancy is a highly responsible legal pursuit and requires diplomacy, knowledge of the relevant forms to fill out, knowledge of the Marriage Act and subsequent Amendments, knowledge of marriage procedures and how to conduct a professional ceremony and register the ceremony. So *"just*

*read out of a book"*, I don't think so! I also believe that Celebrant's should undertake a business degree.

I have enjoyed every ceremony and was always honest with my couples and sometimes told them *"If you want a serious celebrant, it isn't me"* and so I lost some bookings because of my honesty.

I still have my red book but decided to retire from Celebrancy however I continue professional counselling.

I have performed ceremonies in homes, gardens, beaches, parks, reception places, Sydney harbour, and the Sydney Opera House. Each was *"Memorable"* in its own way for various reasons. Some very good, some unusual, some particularly unusual, and some absolutely remarkable. Experiences are too numerous to retell all here but I have loved every minute of it and I hope each celebrant reading this can enjoy the very important role as much as I have.

*"If you want a serious celebrant, it isn't me" .*

Barbara Bell



# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

Nola Debney



A Mother, Grandmother, and real estate business owner, she had the opportunity to live in many parts of Australia, but when **Nola**

**Debney** moved from Western Australia chose Batemans Bay, a beautiful place on the South Coast of NSW, where she continues her work as a real estate agent, which gives her the opportunity to see the abundance of stunning locations and beautiful scenery that the area is blessed and as a Celebrant since 2009, recognises how incredibly suited the area is for weddings and other celebrations. She enjoys performing weddings and funerals, because she likes working with people at the times that love is plainly seen and felt. She is well known in the region and attends Women In Business meetings regularly.



Her greatest fear is mispronouncing a name. Her first wedding was for a couple whose parents had travelled from France and the group wanted to stand in a circle which was wonderful and well rehearsed but the circle lasted on 30 seconds as someone wanted to take photos and immediately broke the circle. It was then like musical chairs as we all hilariously moved back and forth trying to regain the circle.

Her ceremonies are mainly in and around Batemans Bay, and she has also occasionally travels to other areas including Wollongong, transporting her PA System to a variety of locations from rain forests to beaches. She sees a rehearsal as an essential part of all of her ceremonies making sure everyone knows their specific role and tasks before the big day and to ensure perfection.

At one of her first weddings, the groom teared up so much over his vows that it took him minutes regain some control. It was just seemed that he went on for ages, so much so that Nola was worried that he was in distress and had changed his mind, however he regained composure and continued. It was at that time a total new experience for Nola who has since, made certain that there was a 'hanky' nearby. She now finds it lovely when the bride or groom tear up.

Nola explained that the beautiful surrounding on the South Coast can have their own unique problems. Beaches usually have a breeze and on one occasion, while she was setting up, the wind snapped up the Wedding Certificate taking it down the beach with Nola in hot pursuit in high

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heels in full run over the sand. She caught it and was back at the ceremony site to catch her breath before the wedding party arrived and so they were blissfully unaware of the near disaster.

The wind also played havoc on a headland, with waves crashing onto the rocks below with an incredible noisy that her PA struggled to overcome. The wind was so strong that the wedding party and guests only just managed to keep standing. That fortunately was planned as a very short ceremony even though guests had travelled all the way from the UK and so Nola always felt the guests had been rushed around, particularly as there was then a race to get inside the venue to escape the wind and relax.

She has had to deal with outdoor toilets, her PA and the guests overheating in the boiling sun and thunder storms. On one occasion, using a corded microphone, she tripped on the cable snapped its plug. A muso among the guests quickly pulled out insulation tape and held the cable in place to allow the ceremony to continue.

On another occasion the bride arrived over an hour late for a ceremony inside ceremony at an aeroplane hanger. The groom had come to the conclusion that she wasn't coming and so was about to cancel just as the bride finally arrived. All of the above were handled quietly and efficiently and were lessons learned for next time.

When Nola broke an arm while on holidays in Port Macquarie, she had to quickly learn how to write with her left hand and how to perform with just one wing but fortunately had a friend who could perform manual tasks for her including being her chauffer.

Nola joyfully proclaims *"all my weddings have been different, enjoyable, and a pleasure to be part of."*





# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Melissa Sheehy



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<https://melissasheehyceleb.wixsite.com/website-1>  
[melissasheehy.celebrant@gmail.com](mailto:melissasheehy.celebrant@gmail.com)



I am always amazed at the diverse backgrounds of Celebrants, we all have different stories that have brought us to celebrating love and bring different experiences to the table. I enjoyed a long career in customer service, mediation and dispute resolution and held an integral role in the public service. I hold a Certificate IV in Customer Contact and am a Justice of the Peace but was looking for a different interaction with members of the community. A couple of Celebrants urged me to take this path, however at the time I was busy in a full time job and my children were young. As time went on, I saw a career change was needed. Whilst still working full time, I completed my course, and became a civil marriage celebrant in 2018 – I have never looked back!

I have been married for over thirty eight years and have three beautiful children – all grown up! After some soul searching on our future direction, my husband and I decided on a life and sea change, taking us to the waterfront in beautiful Sussex Inlet, on the South Coast of NSW. Here we are enjoying a wonderful life and appreciate the opportunity to take off in our caravan to see new places.



After a busy career, I have found the role of a full time Celebrant absolutely wonderful. It is an honour to be a Celebrant, whether the ceremony is for a funeral, memorial, marriage or other life celebration. It is a real pleasure meeting couples and families, listening to their unique stories, their hopes and their dreams to create a



memorable and personal ceremony. I learn something new from every meeting and ceremony and try to be a calming influence during such an important time in

someone's life. There have been some interested tales along the way. At the time they may not be funny, but you have to laugh and keep going



as crying just ruins your makeup. I've had a groom take his sweet time to arrive (over an hour late), my PA play up during the ceremony to learn that a lady was using it as a seat, a member of the wedding party suffer badly from morning sickness (*now I carry vomit bags in my kit*) and a black snake witness the ceremony in the bushes right behind where I was standing. Fortunately there have been so many beautiful and memorable ceremonies where I have



been totally blown away by the love and positive energy from everyone present. I have had the pleasure to meet so many incredible people – families, fellow Celebrants and vendors and have formed many lovely friendships along the way. I am happy to drive to different locations for ceremonies – what a great country we are free to explore. I look forward to meeting you!

and positive energy from everyone present. I have had the pleasure to meet so many incredible people – families, fellow Celebrants and vendors and have formed many lovely friendships along the way. I am happy to drive to different locations for ceremonies – what a great country we are free to explore. I look forward to meeting you!





# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Lorraine Gawne



Lorraine Gawne CMC is a Marriage and Funeral Celebrant. Lorraine, 88 years, and her husband Bruce will incredibly be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary on 2/1/2024.

### CONGRATULATIONS LORRAINE & BRUCE

She has now retired from Marriage Celebrancy but continues with funerals

#### She wrote this article earlier this year:

My name is **Lorraine Gawne** and I was appointed as a celebrant on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May 1977, I have been a Celebrant for 46 years.

At that time I believe there was no other Celebrant between Wagga and the South Australian border. I was doing weddings from Wagga through to Griffith up to Mildura and up to Ivanhoe.

I have also celebrated weddings from Tasmania - South Australia , Queensland , Melbourne Victoria and regional Victoria and all over N.S.W

The first wedding I performed was on the 5th November 1977, right here in Grong Grong; Mr and Mrs. Pat Magann .I still have bookings into next year and have made many dear friends along the way; often now marrying the children of those I have married previously. I still enjoy the honour of this special pleasure I have been given and regard being a Celebrant as a special and humble joy .

Around 1991 I initiated and opened the Canberra and Riverina Marriage Celebrants Association and as Canberra area grew, I encouraged them to stay close to us but separate and then Riverina did the same. At that time we had outings and dinners etc. and it seemed Canberra was a little far away for



Lorraine and Bruce at a wedding she performed in the Hunter Valley for her grandson Cain Gawne.

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evenings out, so we became two.

I was the President of the Wagga group for many years and am still a member with lots of lovely friends scattered over this southern part of N.S.W.

I have encouraged many to take up this wonderful journey of Celebrancy, you will never regret it.

Grong Grong is a little town of about 150 people in central Riverina so from little things, big things can grow. I recall singing a little chorus of this many, many years ago at Sunday School.

If I have helped you in any way, thank you for asking me and also thank you for initiating the project you are undertaking.

Incidentally, my son Brian is and has been a celebrant for 10 years or more now so we are not dying out. I might add he is a very good one and I am very proud of him .

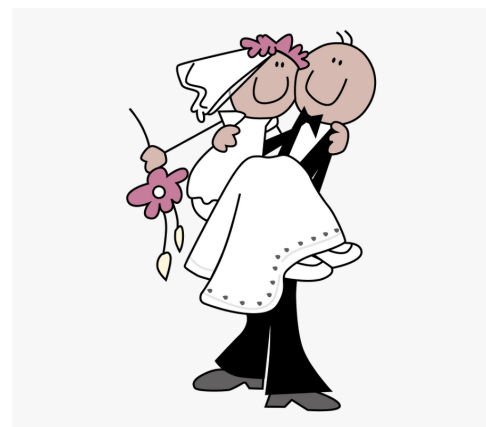
*All the best --*

*Lorraine Gawne A943*

*(read about her son on the next page)*

"I have made many dear friends along the way, often now marrying the children of those I have married previously".

Lorraine Gawne



# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Brian Gawne



'Kee-Largo"  
Grong Grong NSW 2652  
(m: 0427 487 505  
[brianjgawne@gmail.com](mailto:brianjgawne@gmail.com)

**Brian Gawne is Lorraine's Gawne's son and was appointed as Marriage Celebrant on 5/12/2008 and so will be Celebrating 15 years as a Celebrant as this newsletters is**

**distributed. Like his Mum, he also performs Funerals. Brian is also in Grong Grong, is a keen golfer and traveller, and he has been married to Judith for 40 years**

He is a 4th generation farmer of the Grong Grong area in the Riverina growing mainly wheat, barley and canola and runs around 800 breeding sheep. He and his wife Judith have four adult children and 10 grandchildren.

Brian completed his celebrancy training under the guidance of the late Keith Lammond in a 5 day intensive course in 2008 in Sydney. Being from a small rural town there are limited numbers of weddings each year which sees him averaging around six weddings per year. As well as local weddings though, Brian has travelled to Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania to conduct ceremonies with the

most special being the marriage of his son, Daniel to his wife Jess in 2012 in Brisbane (pictured). He said: *"It was difficult to hold back tears of pride and joy on that occasion"*.

Brian is also a funeral celebrant and conducts 25-30 funerals per annum. He says that there is a fulfilling sense of compassion being able to help a family through the loss of a loved one and delivering a worthy, reflective farewell for the deceased.

Brian's decision to become a celebrant was because of his observance of the enjoyment that his mother Lorraine had gained from her many years as a celebrant. *"Mum has performed over 1,200 weddings, as many as four in one day on an Easter Saturday many years ago! She is very well respected as a celebrant and as a community leader and has certainly been an inspiration and flawless role model for me."*

Remuneration has never been a contributing factor for Brian to become or continue as a celebrant. The opportunity to meet new people and to help create their

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most special memories in the form of their wedding or child naming ceremonies creates a bond with the couple and their families that continues well beyond the day of their ceremony. *"This is why I'm a celebrant - The opportunity to help, celebrate and befriend members of the community"*.

### Brian Gawne "At Your Service"



Brian & Judith on a recent trip to Alaska



*"This is why I'm a celebrant - The opportunity to help, celebrate and befriend members of the community"*  
Brian Gawne



# HISTORY THE HISTORY OF CELEBRANCY- CELEBRANT SNAPSHOTS

## Luke Firth

I began my journey as a celebrant a decade ago, and as you all know, we are so lucky to be able to do what we do, being a part of celebrating a couple's relationship is a joy like no other. After 850 weddings, I've so far been fortunate to have won 11 Australian Bridal Industry Awards and 3 Wedding Industry Awards.

However, managing the administrative side has often been a time-consuming and complicated task. From tracking wedding details to financial records, all the legal requirements, marketing efforts to staying organized - it's a lot to juggle, especially if you only conduct a few weddings annually. This realisation led me to explore different ways to make running the management side of being a celebrant hassle-free and more efficient.

After experimenting with various software tools and systems, I decided to create my own, a comprehensive solution that combines the functionalities of several software programs into one cohesive platform. Imagine having the capabilities of a sales funnel and CRM (customer relationship manager), document filing, a couple's portal, tasks and calendar, invoices/contracts/quotes all integrated into a single user-friendly interface. And then uploading into your BDM portal seamlessly, you can wave goodbye to the days of double entries and the associated headaches.

One of the key insights I gained through my years as a celebrant and trainer was that many of us in the field only conduct a couple of weddings annually. With such a sporadic schedule, it's all too easy to forget what needs to be done for each ceremony. This is where my online software will truly shine. It's designed to accommodate celebrants whether they perform one wedding every other year or a hundred, offering a simplified and intuitive experience for everyone.

For those who officiate only a handful of weddings, it will make it effortless to manage and organize each ceremony from start to finish. The online software provides a clear and logical timeline for you to follow, ensuring that nothing is overlooked. From initial client meetings to creating bespoke ceremonies, tracking vows, and managing schedules - everything is at your fingertips. No more frantic last-minute preparations or forgotten details on the big day.

For celebrants who conduct more weddings, it provides a scalable solution that adapts to your growing business. It streamlines your operations, allowing you to efficiently manage multiple ceremonies simultaneously. You can maintain a consistent and professional approach, all while keeping your client interactions personalized and memorable.



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Moreover, it will be priced to be extremely affordable. I understand that many celebrants operate on a limited budget, and this software is designed to be accessible to all, regardless of the size of your business. I believe that every celebrant, no matter how infrequent their ceremonies, deserves the tools and support to make their work more enjoyable and efficient.

This will be a game-changer for celebrants across Australia. Whether you're a seasoned professional with hundreds of weddings under your belt or someone who occasionally officiates a ceremony, this software is designed to help you save time, money, and reduce the stress associated with managing your celebrant responsibilities. So you can focus on what you do best - creating memorable and meaningful wedding ceremonies.

Just in May I was privileged to have officiated 3 ceremonies on the one day, and trying to keep on top of everything was a logistical nightmare. Luckily by the time Yvonne and Peter were exchanging their vows, at the stunning Bathers Beach House, in Fremantle WA, they had no idea of all the stress and work I'd had to put in to make sure nothing was forgotten. If only my system had already been up and running, I wouldn't have even needed to break a sweat. I've included some photos from the incredible Kevin McGinn.

[info@lukefirthcelebrant.com.au](mailto:info@lukefirthcelebrant.com.au)

[www.lukefirthcelebrant.com.au](http://www.lukefirthcelebrant.com.au)



"The couple had no idea of all the stress and work I had to put in to make sure nothing was forgotten".

Luke Firth



# THE HISTORY OF MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA

## Marriage in Traditional Aboriginal Societies

Current estimates are that there were over 660 unique indigenous cultures and languages, about 850,000 people living in what is now the Sydney coast and up to 8,000,000 across Australia. There is debate over when humans came to the Australian continent. Archaeological diggings in the Blue Mountains suggest that the Daruk people may have been there as long ago as 100,000 years. Other sites in Tasmania suggest that there has been human habitation on the island since the Ice Ages.

[http://www.hawkesburyhistory.org.au/articles/Battle\\_of\\_Vinegar.html#2](http://www.hawkesburyhistory.org.au/articles/Battle_of_Vinegar.html#2)



Australian Government

Australian Law Reform Commission

According to a study published on The Australian

Law Reform Commission webpage, Aboriginal society governed by customary laws handed down by the creative ancestral beings. The study reads:

Marriage was a central feature of traditional Aboriginal societies.<sup>[6]</sup> The need to maintain populations and thereby to ensure that there was always someone to attend sites and keep up traditions was matched by the desire to ensure that children were produced according to the right family groups and the correct affiliations.<sup>[7]</sup> For these purposes freedom of marriage was restricted by the prohibitions against the marriage of certain close relatives and by the rule of exogamy, that is, marrying outside one's group.<sup>[8]</sup> An important factor in determining the parties to a marriage was the balancing of kinship obligations, including reciprocal obligations between individuals, families or larger groups. The interests of the parties, and their attraction or affection for each other, were considered subsidiary to these obligations.<sup>[9]</sup> The creation of marriage alliances and the obligations that this involved were closely linked with relationships to the land. Spiritual affiliation with land included a series of ritual obligations and duties often acquired through inheritance in either the male or female line, or both. And marriage was a primary means for maintaining attachment to land.<sup>[10]</sup> According to Dr Bell

*Perhaps the most important difference between Aboriginal marriage patterns and those of white Australia is that the marriage is not seen as a contract between individuals but rather as one which implicates both kin and country men of the parties involved. If we explore the web of relations which surround an arranged marriage entered into at the time of initiation of a young male, we find that at least three generations are implicated.<sup>[11]</sup>*

**Marriage in Traditional Aboriginal Societies | ALRC**

Whilst the *Marriage Act 1961* created the role of the Civil Marriage celebrant it left the registration of marriages with the states and only recognised marriages of two people but according to the ALRC, did not recognise any other forms of union, including traditional Aboriginal unions.

## THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY IN THE COLONY OF NEW SOUTH WALES (AUSTRALIA).

According to descendants of Henry and Susannah Kable, and their family history webpage, they were the married in the first European/Christian ceremony in Australia.

<https://henrykable-susannahholmes.com/>

Henry Kable born in 1763 Suffolk and Susannah Holmes Born 1764 Norfolk, aged just 19, were each found guilty of theft, in 1783 and 1784 (respectively) and sentenced to death by hanging. They were incarcerated at Norwich Castle gaol for over three and a half years where they met and it was in this squalid setting that they fell in love with. It was here, too, that they requested on several occasions to be able to marry but as prisoners this was not allowed, however in 1786 she gave birth to a son, Henry Junior.

Their death sentences were reprieved but sentenced to transportation to the American Colonies however the American War of Independence from England ended (1783), England meant convicted felons were no longer able to be transported to the American Colonies and so Henry and Susannah sent to Terra Australis.

The Fleet departed Portsmouth, England on 13 May 1787 and arrived in Port Jackson on 26 January 1788 and the flag of settlement was raised in the newly established English Colony of New South Wales (Australia). Just two weeks later, Church of England, Chaplain Richard Johnson, with permission by Governor Arthur Phillip, was called upon to officiate at the weddings of five couples at the NSW prison colony on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1788 According to the National Library of Australia, the first marriage documented in Australia was the union between convicts William Parr and Mary MacCormick.

Among the couples married that day were Henry Kable and Susannah Holmes who signed the marriage register with an X.

Their marriage is recorded in St Phillip's Church Sydney, Register as the third of the five couples married on that day, with each signing with an "X".

Henry and Susannah had 11 children, nine of whom reached adulthood and their descendants are the longest continuous line of First Fleet Australians.

*We will look further at First Nation wedding rituals and the history of Marriage in Australia in the next or future editions. The very first appointment of a First Nation Marriage person as a Celebrant has not been determined as the AG advises that cultural origin is not listed in the directory of Marriage Celebrants.*





# THE HISTORY OF MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA

10/02/1787	CofE, Chaplain Richard Johnson officiate the weddings of 5 couples at the NSW prison colony.
1856	The Registry was formed to register life events in New South Wales
10/06/1884	Married women could finally own property
Early 1900's	"marriage bar" of married women in the Commonwealth Public Service was introduced
1901	The Commonwealth Constitution becomes operative.
01/06/1918	The Aboriginals Ordinance 1918 restricted marriage between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men in the Northern Territory. State laws controlled marriage for Indigenous Australians.
16/11/1942	legal age for Marriage raised in Tasmania from 12 to 16 for females and 14 to 18 for males. Other followed
1946	The NSW BDM, following the end of WWII, set aside a room for ceremonies.
1959	<a href="#">Sir Garfield Barwick QC</a> introduced the <a href="#">Matrimonial Causes Act 1959</a>
09/11/1961	Attorney General, Garfield Barwick, introduced The Marriage Act 1961 The Act recognised only marriages of two people and did not recognise any other forms of union, including traditional Aboriginal unions. The Act set the minimum marriageable age as 18.
18/11/1966	The bar on the employment of married women in the Commonwealth Public Service was abolished.
Thursday 19/07/1973	Commonwealth Attorney General, Lionel Murphy, despite widespread opposition appointed Lois D'Arcy (509), as the first independent civil marriage celebrant.
24/07/1973	Miss Lyn Knorr VIC 3437 was Registered as a Celebrant.
02/08/1973	Mrs Jill-Ellen Fuller NSW 2047, was Registered as a Celebrant, the first Celebrant appointment in NSW
05/12/1973	Mr Parsons Victor VIC 3043 was Registered as a Celebrant
16/01/1974	Mr Wayne Nicoll NSW was Registered as a Celebrant
18/01/1974	Ms <a href="#">Junie Morosi</a> , ACT was Registered as a Celebrant
1/02/1974	Peta Callaghan, 563 was registered as a Celebrant in Tasmania
1/02/1974	Mrs Kathleen Venn TAS was Registered as a Celebrant
10/02/1974	Mrs Angela Burns QLD was Registered as a Celebrant
17/04/1974	Mrs Eileen Collins NSW was Registered as a Celebrant
17/04/1974	Ms Pamela Williamson WA was Registered as a Celebrant
18/04/1974	Mrs Dee Potter of Tasmania was Registered as a Celebrant
27/02/1974	Dally Messeneger, was finally appointed as a Civil Celebrant by telegram.
18/04/1974	Dee Potter 605 was registered as a Celebrant in Tasmania
24/04/974	Mrs Beryl Gregory , VIC was Registered as a Celebrant
24/04/1974	Kath Buttriss (born Kathleen Lyle Cameron) appointed as a Civil Marriage Celebrant.
08/05/1974	Mrs Carol Astbury WA was Registered as a Celebrant
12/05/1974	Ms Belinda Kendall- White was Registered as a Celebrant
15/05/1974	Mrs Sue Vardon SA was Registered as a Celebrant Mrs Barbara Parnell NSW was Registered as a Celebrant
24/07/1974	Mrs June Wells and Ms Susan Yarrow of QLD were Registered as a Celebrant
09/1974	The Attorney General Lionel Murphy, approved individual celebrants advertising in the press, providing that such ads were no longer than one column by one inch.
29/01/1975	Maria Souris 695 was registered as a Celebrant in Tasmania.
12/06/1975	The Family Law Act 1975 established no-fault divorce, with 12 months separation being sufficient to prove breakdown of the marriage (prior to that, some form of wrongdoing by either party had to be proved).
27/07/1975	Fireman, Robert Smith was registered as Celebrant number 772, <a href="#">as was Leslie Bassall 764.</a>
28/08/1975	National Treasure, Faith Bandler, was registered as a marriage Celebrant under her birth name of Ida Bandler from 25/08/1975 to 14/08/1991.
22/12/1975	The 24 <sup>th</sup> Attorney General Bob Ellicott QC was appointed. He lengthened the notice period from 7 days to a month to combat the divorce rate.
26/05/1977	Lorraine Gawne, of Grong Grong, was registered as a Marriage Celebrant
14/03/1978	The Hague Convention on Celebration and Recognition of the Validity of Marriages implemented, <a href="#">4b59dd11-e4bd-4b96-9244-513645c7658b.pdf (hcch.net)</a>
17/12/1982	Maree Callaghan was appointed as a Civil Celebrant and believed that at 36 years of age, that she was the youngest Celebrant at the time.



# THE HISTORY OF MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA

1985	The Australian Marriage Act Amendment Act (1985)
1986	Celebrant Diane Storey, Melbourne, organised & created, the <i>Still-birth and Neonatal Death Support (SANDS)</i> group,
Oct 1990	Rona Goold appointed as a Civil Celebrant and continued for over 30 years.
8/10/1991	Charles Foley was registered as a Marriage Celebrant
1992	The NSW BDM Registry became non-budget dependant (a trading enterprise).
1995	Celebrancy fees were deregulated after strong representation from celebrants the Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995 centralised registrations
16/02/1995	Dawn Dickson, was registered as a Marriage Celebrant.
28/04/1995	Craig Moran, Registered as a marriage Celebrant,
2/04/1995	Phillip Brown was appointed as Civil Celebrant.
1996	Robert Smith, and Barbara Bell sat on an advisory panel on to assist the NSW BDM to create Lifelink.
11/2000	The review of the Marriage Celebrant Program commenced by the Government 1997 and a Proposals Paper for reform was released. <a href="https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/bd/bd0102/02bd112">https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/bd/bd0102/02bd112</a>
01/04/2001	The Netherlands was the first country to extend marriage laws to include same-sex couples.
27/09/2001	The Marriage Amendment Bill introduced but then lapsed.
14/02/2002	The Marriage Amendment Bill re- introduced as The Marriage Amendment Bill 2002
01/09/2003	After an attorney-general inquiry into the Civil Celebrants Program, the Marriage Amendment Act 2002 was passed and changes were enacted in 2003.
4/02/2004	Facebook launched
1/04/2004	Gmail launched
2004	Jason and Adrian Tuazon McCheyne, a gay male couple who had married on 23 August 2003 in Canada, sought to have their marriage recognised in Australia.
27/05/2004	Federal Attorney-General Philip Ruddock, under PM John Howard, introduced the <i>Marriage Amendment Bill 2004</i> to incorporate a definition of marriage into the <i>Marriage Act 1961</i> and to outlaw the recognition of same-sex marriages lawfully entered into in foreign jurisdictions.
16/08/2004	The <i>Marriage Amendment Bill 2004</i> received royal assent preventing the success of action by Jason & Adrian Tuazon McCheyne who sort to have their marriage recognised in Australia
009/2004 to 05/2017	After the <a href="#">Howard government</a> amended the law in August 2004 to prevent same-sex marriages, during this period, 22 bills to allow same-sex marriage were introduced to Federal Parliament.
9/09/2007	The release of vocational qualification <a href="#">CHC41502 - Certificate IV in Marriage Celebrancy (Release 1)</a> . <a href="https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC41502">https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC41502</a>
2/09/2008	Radio TV & personality, Greg Evans, after Training under his mentor Dally Messenger, was registered as a Marriage Celebrant.
2/09/2008	Annemarie McDonell registered as a Marriage Celebrant
1st/03/2009	The Rudd, Labor Government enacted the <a href="#">Family Law Act 2009</a> , which recognised the property rights of each partner of a de facto relationship, including a same-sex relationship, for the purposes of the <a href="#">Family Law Act 1975</a> .
5/02/2010	Johanna (Anna) Ferris was registered as a Marriage Celebrant.
24/03/2011	<a href="#">The release of vocational qualification CHC42608, Certificate IV in Celebrancy (Release 2) which superseded CHC41502, Certificate IV in Marriage Celebrancy (Release 1)</a> . <a href="https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC42608">tps://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC42608</a>
26/11/2011	Sarah May Alexander was registered as a Marriage Celebrant.
02/2012	<a href="#">Version 1.0 of the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for Authorised Celebrants was released.</a>
2012	Keith Lammond stepped down from President of the <i>Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc (AMC)</i> .
12/12/2013	The High Court decided unanimously that the ACT's Marriage Equality (Same Sex) Act 2013 cannot operate concurrently with the federal <i>Marriage Act 1961</i> . <a href="#">ParInfo - Marriage Amendment Bill 2012 [and] Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2012 [and] Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010 (aph.gov.au)</a>
July 2014	Version 2.0 of the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 was released
8/12/2015	The release of the vocational qualification CHC41015 - Certificate IV in Celebrancy (Release 1) superseding CHC42608.
15/12/2015	Ludwig,(Lou) Szymkow, the author/collator of this history, was registered as a Marriage Celebrant





# THE HISTORY OF MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA

1 <sup>st</sup> /11/2016	the Australian government's push for a plebiscite on same-sex marriage was defeated in the Senate.
16/10/2017	<a href="#">Marriage Regulations 2017</a> released
15/11/2017	The <a href="#">Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017</a> , was introduced by Western Australian, Liberal Party Senator <a href="#">Dean Smith</a> amending the definition of "marriage" in the Act, omitting the words "man and a woman" and replacing it with the gender-neutral "2 people". <sup>[29][30]</sup>
15/11/2017	Plebiscite held: 'Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?' 12.7 million postal votes were submitted with 61.6% voting Yes. 7.82 million voted Yes, and 4.87 million people responded No. The strongest vote in favour of gay marriage was in the ACT, followed by Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia. New South Wales had the lowest Yes vote at 58%.
29/11/2017	The <a href="#">Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017</a> passed the Senate by 43 votes to 12 on 29 November 2017
7/12/2017	The <a href="#">Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017</a> was passed in the <a href="#">House of Representatives</a> on 7 December 2017, with only four votes against. <sup>[31][32]</sup>
8/12/2017	The amendment to the Marriage Act to legalise same-sex marriage was the <a href="#">Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017</a> was given royal assent by the governor-general, Sir Peter Cosgrove, on 8 December 2017. <sup>[33]</sup>
15/12/2017	The first same-sex wedding under <a href="#">Australian</a> law was held. <sup>[nb 1]</sup>
30/06/2018	Maree Callaghan retired from Celebrancy after 36 years.
July 2018	Version 4.0 of the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for authorised celebrants released to reflect feedback from celebrants, their representatives and other stakeholders during the May-June 2018 public consultation.
Jun 2021	After over 30 years, Rona Goold retired from Celebrancy.
September 2021	Version 5.0 of the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for authorised celebrants was released to take into account changes to the Notice of Intended Marriage, Official Certificate of Marriage, and Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage forms that came into effect on 1 September 2021.
1/09/2021	Publication of an update of <a href="#">Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for authorised celebrants [PDF 2.88 MB]</a>

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## COORDINATOR'S COMMENTS



**What an amazing year, actually an amazing 50 years.**

There were conferences and meetings across the country to Celebrate the 50th anniversary of Civil Celebrancy but I still think the very best was the AMC Conference. Absolutely loved it. Was so much fun and so informative. The main

speaker was of course Dally Messenger III who was the very first Celebrant to apply for Authorisation under the Marriage Act 1961, to the then Attorney General Sir Garfield Barwick. Barwick had overcome opposition from the Catholic Church, public servants and other politicians including members of his own party to push divorce and marriage reform laws through and deserves credit for his actions.

The honour of the first appointment of course went to mother and teacher, **Lois D'Arcy** twelve years later on 19th July 1973 when Lionel Murphy established the Civil Celebrants program. **We should all Celebrate that first appointment every 19th July.**

Like Barwick, Murphy also faced strong opposition to reform from the Catholic Church, public servants and other politicians including members of his own party but he also pushed through divorce and marriage reforms, even personally writing and posting letters to new Celebrant appointees bypassing public servants who had 'lost' Dally's application and only found it after Lionel Murphy demanding action.

Initially Celebrants had to wait, sometimes years to be appointed and there was little or no training and when the AG's office assessed Celebrants for competency over 92% did not satisfy compliance and so the Certificate IV in Celebrancy was created followed by Obligatory Professional Development (OPD) both of which continue though the OPD has recently gone fully online.

On 3 May 1974, at Lionel Murphies' met with all Celebrants. He spoke with each individually and appointed Jill Ellen Fuller, the first Celebrant appointment in New South Wales, as the President of the new **'The Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Australia'** (ACMCA). She personally financed the association for the first year. Maureen Barron, Murphy's personal secretary, was initially appointed as National Secretary but Murphy soon after appointed Dally Messenger in that position.

Early on, Celebrants were not only restricted in numbers but were restricted in how much they could charge and

how they could advertise and so none could make a living wage from Celebrancy which is a far cry from the current level of over 9000 Civil Celebrants appointed, the advertising that takes place, and no restrictions on fees.

When Dally Messenger III began his Funeral Celebrancy, he and other funeral celebrants faced opposition on many fronts, including other Marriage Celebrants. Then when he tried to encourage Celebrants to charge a fee that would enable a reasonable income, he was astoundingly prosecuted for alleged price fixing.

The journey of Celebrants has obviously not always been easy with a huge loss of business and postponements during Covid, a downturn in the economy impacting on bookings and now we are faced with BDMs promoting themselves, not as registries, but as independent providers, even tagging advertisements onto state government Covid reports and promoting government buildings and sites as venues.

There is of course a huge variety and diversity among Celebrants. While many Celebrants such as Robyn Foster marched in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and engaged in public speaking in support of equality, some celebrants objected to equality (same sex marriage) on 'religious grounds' which is a bit bizarre given that we are Civil Celebrants but a new category of Civil Religious Celebrants was created.

The standards of ceremonies varies considerably. Some adhere to the perspective of 'tradition' but if we fully adhered to that concept, we would all be ministers of religion because that is where most 'traditions' originate. However over 70% of ceremonies are now conducted by Civil Celebrants, some of whom base their ceremonies entirely upon the appropriation and variation of church scripts while others push the boundaries with one Celebrant advertising that he performs ceremonies in his underwear and I had one where the witnesses were selected by a chook raffle. We might not all agree on how a ceremony should be conducted but we only secure bookings if we meet the market demands.

The MLCS has determined that there is still a need to improve the standard of compliance with the Marriage Act and we often see questions in support forums that might leave some of us speechless and so there is now a push to encourage all celebrants to join an association where they can get much needed support and additional training. The AMC even offers monthly training nights via Zoom

**Through it all though there is one clear certainty and that is that we are all passionate about our work.**

Many see it as a vocation and others as a 'side hustle' but through it all, we deliver a service to the public that is desired and appreciated.

**I know that I love what I do.**

**Let's always Celebrate Celebrancy.**