

July 2024

Volume 3, Issue 6

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COVER PICTURE—candle ritual at a Naming →



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.



Last month, you were promised articles on Viking Weddings, OPD and Namings, all of which you will find have been extensively researched but there is so much more. You also are of course invited to contribute on any Ceremony related subject. This newsletter is a resource for Celebrants and an opportunity to share experiences, knowledge, ideas and information. There is space for you to share your ideas. Articles on Celebrants & AI, Scams and Garters have been held off for next month.

## NAME GIVING-HISTORY & CEREMONY

### Inside this issue:

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- **And so much more**

The following articles have been stood over to next month

- AI & the Celebrant
- Deep Fake
- Scam Alert
- Garter Traditions
- Fake Celebrant charged

This Newsletter has been extended to include the MLCS advice on changes to the Marriage Act

Welcoming a new life with a Naming Ceremony is one of the most joyous events as it presents and welcomes a new person to family & community.

Often referred to simply as a Naming, a Name Giving Ceremony is performed by a Civil Celebrant as a symbolic celebration but requires no licences and has no legalities.

Throughout history some form of ceremony has been held to name an individual through ritual and tradition, marking the special event as a welcoming, a rite of passage, a coming of age, an honouring of the individual and family, and plays a vital role in all aspects of life and community.

According to the *Australian Centre for Meditation and Mindfulness*, by pausing for ritual we create space in which we can:

- Honour the joys of life,
- Release emotions that go with transitions, beginnings and endings,
- Find meaning, learn and recognise the gifts from relationships and life events,
- Celebrate the highs,
- Acknowledge transitions and changes and react appropriately,

- Find meaning and understanding to evolve. *Peace, Mind Psychology* describes rituals as giving symbolic meaning, which goes beyond the actions practiced during the ritual.

Though a Naming Ceremony is a Rite of Passage, it has no legal bearing, however it does elevate the standing of the individual as it does carry with it a spiritual, emotional and practical offering as a welcoming, along with a recognition and acknowledgement of a transition in life, and so it honours the individual, the family, and even the community while simultaneously doing the same for that individual within the family, and the family within the community.

A person who chooses to legally change their name must apply to the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages in the State or Territory and once that is accomplished, a Naming Ceremony would be a public announcement and acknowledgement of that change. The subsequent BDM Certificate confirming the legal name change, could even be incorporated into the ceremony.

There are some presumptions in this article including that there are parents involved and

Continued next page.....

UPCOMING  
Sth COAST  
MEETINGS

4pm, Sunday 15th September 2024  
(Lunch) Sunday 8th December 2024

.....from previous page

that the person being honoured by the ceremony is a child, however, depending on the circumstances, there could be only one parent, or no parents involved at all, and of course, the person may not be a child at all, however, for simplicity, the subject of the naming Ceremony will most often be referred to a child and there will be references to 'parents'.

### **Diversity and History of Naming Rituals**

**Naming ceremonies are as old and diverse as humanity.** By studying the history, variations and traditions we can find inspiration for our own modern ceremonies ensuring that we can respectfully share in cultural, religious and varied inclusion without appropriating them.

So let's look, albeit lightly but broadly, at how different cultures, societies, and religions have addressed Naming Rituals through the ages up to modern times and consider how parts might be included in a Civil Ceremony.

The **Wikmungkan** tribe of First Nation people in north-eastern Australia carries out the naming ritual during the actual birth of the baby with the midwife calling out the names of all the child's living relatives in turn and the name chosen is the one being called at the moment of the final stages of the birthing process when the placenta is removed from the mother. There is then a special bond between the child and the relative whose name is given. Soon after, a Smoking Ceremony is held by the mother and her mother to protect the baby's health with the child being held near the purifying smoke.

In **Druidism**, the naming ceremony may sometimes be called, "*The First Oath*" and the name is usually referred to as a '*Holy Name*' or '*Druid Name*'.

In **Hinduism**, the ceremony is traditionally known as Namakarana or the Namakarana Samskara, and is conducted in an elaborative form on the 12<sup>th</sup> day after birth. In **Kerala**, this is conducted on the 28<sup>th</sup> day and called the Noolukettu (meaning tying thread) while in **Nepal**, the naming ceremony is known as Nwaran and is celebrated on the 11<sup>th</sup> day from the day of birth to give a name to a child according to their lunar horoscope.

In **Islam**, the baby is named on the seventh day by the parents who decide together on the child's name.

In **Turkish** traditions, the paternal grandfather whispers adhan (call to prayer) into the right ear of the baby and afterward repeats or tells the chosen name of the newborn baby three times.

In the **Jewish** tradition, baby boys are named at a brit milah on the eighth day after their birth. Girls are named within the first two weeks.

In the **Wiccan** religion, at the initiation (or dedication) ritual, initiates take a Wiccan Name (Craft Name) that is not used in public, but only among other Wiccans in religious gatherings. For a Wiccan, taking a Wiccan name symbolizes a rebirth. Note the similarities to Druidism

In **Japan**, babies are given a short, simple name soon after their birth, which they use until their teens but as they approach adult status, there is a special ceremony where they are given a longer, formal name to be used by everyone outside their family.

In some parts of **Africa** different names are written on pieces of paper and the name is chosen from the first piece

of paper that the baby touches and some African families break a coconut to sprinkle the baby with the milk, asking God to pour blessings on the baby.

Amongst **Swahili speaking Kenyans**, the first or birth name called 'Äòjina la utotoni,' is given to babies at birth by an elderly relative and is usually refers to the child's appearance, like 'ÄòBiubwa,' which means 'Äòsoft and smooth,' but after up to 40 days, the parents and paternal grandparents choose the 'Äòjina la ukubwani,' or adult name, for the child.

The **Akan Ghanaian** naming ceremony is held seven days after the birth of a baby whereupon the father chooses the name of a beloved relative in the hope that the child will grow up to be like the namesake.

In **Western Culture**, the influence of Baptism & Christenings upon Naming Ceremonies is obvious. The Catholic (translation 'Universal') **Christian Church** had a significant impact on culture for hundreds of years and a Christening (being made a Christian) through Baptism (cleansing, anointing and blessing) by a priest became widespread practice as Christianity spread across the world. The word "*baptise*" comes from a Greek word meaning to dip or plunge or it can also mean to wash or purify.

Up until the third century, Baptism was only given to adults who converted to Christianity but as the church and Christian religion grew, children and infants were Baptised, Infant Baptism, usually conducted by the sixth week of a baby's life, is often erroneously referred to as a Christening. It began a few centuries ago at a time that babies often died at birth and it was believed that if the child had not been baptised it would not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and so it became a sacramental ritual. In the process of Christening, infants were given a 'Christian' name, usually that of a Saint or revered person and so a Christening was also a naming ceremony.

In this ritual select persons were appointed as 'Godparents' whose role it was to offer spiritual and religious guidance to the child and to assist in areas that the parents were unable to. The term '*Godparent*' is of course an obviously religious term not just because of its origin in the Catholic Church but in the name itself and associated responsibilities.

In the Catholic Church, the same rite is repeated at other sacraments including Confirmation, Marriage and Funeral Rites which are conducted before death.

Any Christian can perform a Baptism, (*Christian blessing with water*) but only a member of the clergy can perform a Christening, involving more complex rituals inducting the individual (or group) into that particular Christian church community or denomination.

As people moved away from a reliance on religion and religious rituals, and with the appointment of Civil Marriage Celebrants in 1973, an absence of ritual was felt and the modern Naming Ceremony began to come into widespread practice.

A Naming Ceremony performed by a Civil Celebrant may still include a Baptism, prayers and various religious or cultural rituals and blessings within the modern Civil Naming Ceremony. It is an option.

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*Alternative appellations for Guideparents, Godparents, Guardians & Mentors*



Adherent	Admirer	Advice-Giver	Advisor	Advocate
Arbitrator	Aunt	Authority	Believer	Benefactor
Carer	Champion	Coach	Companion Parent	Conductor
Confidante	Counsellor	Consultant	Defender	Devotee
Educator	Elder	Encourage	Enthusiast	Expert
Fan	Follower	Friend	Guardian	Guide
Guru	Helper	Influencer	Intercessor	Instructor
Leader	Life Protector	Light House	Mediator	Mentor
Moderator	Mystic	Nurturer	Odd-parent	Patron
Protector	Prudent	Role Master	Model	Sage
Solon	Spiritual Guide	Sponsor	Supporter	Teacher
Trainer	Tutor	Uncle	Village Elder	Wise One

**When to Hold a Naming Ceremony**

Commonly, a Naming Ceremony in western culture is held in the first year after birth, often on the first birthday to combine the Naming Ceremony and First Birthday celebrations welcoming the child into the family and community but as can be read in the History of naming, there are many options and not all cultures celebrate birthdays but Celebrate ‘Name Days’ instead, hence each day of the year has a name attribution and a Naming Ceremony may be held on such a relevant day.

Whilst a baby is the most common person honoured by a Naming Ceremony there are other instances where a ceremony might give significance or relevance, regardless of the age of the person:

- Stepchildren taking on a new surname or being ‘welcomed & acknowledged’ in their parent’s new marriage.
- Upon Adoption as a welcoming into a new family
- State wards welcomed into a new family.
- Adults who have a legal name change
- Persons who have transitioned
- A Widowed, Separated or Divorced person reverting to a birth name
- An adult who has never celebrated their name through ritual or ceremony.
- An adolescent who has never been ritually ‘Named’ or wants to change to another name.

**Guideparents, Godparents, Guardians & Mentors**

Commonly at a Naming Ceremony, one or any number of persons may be chosen through an agreement with the parents, to provide mentorship, guidance and support with love and affection, for all of the child’s life. It is one to whom the child can go, for advice, company, or support as an alternate or in addition to the parents.

When a child is *Baptised*, this mentorship role is taken up by a person/s who also stands as a religious guide to the child in faith and Christian belief and so is termed a **Godparent**, teaching the child about God.

In a Naming Ceremony, with no religious content, and no intent of Christian & religious guidance, it would of course be inappropriate, perhaps even absurd, to use the clearly religious term of Godparent and so the appellation of *Guideparent* is often chosen by families because of its similarity, but obvious difference to Godparent.

In a Naming Ceremony, *Guideparent* is a far more accurate term but Celebrant Barbara Bell who inspired this article, prefers to use ‘*Guardian*’. There are many other options limited only by imagination and some can be found in the chart at the top of this page but for simplicity, the term *Guideparent* will be used throughout this article. To be asked to be a Guideparent is an honour and privilege but the full implications of fulfilling the role should be negotiated and understood before appointment, noting that it is not a Legal Guardianship but a secular benefit.

Barbara Bell, Celebrant & trainer points out that if parents wish to appoint a relative or friend to act in a legal capacity as Guardian/s of their child in the event of the death of the parent/s they should consult a solicitor about including that intention into their wills. Whilst two or four, Guideparents are often chosen and ceremonially appointed, there is no limit to the number that may be appointed as all in attendance could be invited to function as mentors and role models for the child.

The parent/s should have confidence that the chosen person/s will promise to give life long assistance and guidance to their child progressing from infant to adolescent, into adulthood and even beyond.

Guideparents undertake to assume appropriate assistance if the occasion arises that the parent or parents need real support which may be:

- ◇ Babysitting
- ◇ Mentorship
- ◇ Providing care and accommodation should the parents be temporarily incapacitated or absent.
- ◇ A friendly non-judgemental listening ear for the child
- ◇ Provide company or advice.
- ◇ Provide Gifts to the child on special occasions.
- ◇ Provide encourage to the child and/or the parents.

**Naming Ceremony within a Wedding Ceremony.**

When there are children, of any age, prior to marriage, the couple may choose to incorporate a Naming Ceremony into the wedding ceremony.



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In such circumstances the Naming would take place after the solemnisation of marriage in which case the Naming would be a much shorter ritual than that of a Naming Ceremony held separately as a standalone event but would occur before the couple and family are 'introduced'.

## Suggested Order Of Service For A Naming

Whilst there are practical or logistical reasons for an Order of Service, there is of course no requirement, legal or otherwise, for a particular format or order and so the following is only a suggestion as to how to incorporate some aspects. The skilled Celebrant will of course expand or create a new script and format, adding or removing tasks & rituals, or do something entirely different, but always in consultation with the parents.

See below



### Credits for this article

Though not the author, a considerable influence in this article is the work of the incredible Barbara L. Bell, J.P. who has retired from Celebrancy but was a Life Member and a Fellow Member of ACMC of NSW & ACT Inc. Her qualifications include: Bachelor of Arts, Graduate Diploma in Education, Graduate Diploma in Psychology, Certificate IV in Marriage Celebrancy and Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. Barbara also taught celebrancy in its various forms and designed a training programme to give a broad overview of Naming Ceremonies for which she wrote her own course resource material for a full day course, titling it: *The Student Handbook for The Naming Course*.

### Other References Used

- \* [Australian Centre for Meditation and Mindfulness](#)
- \* [Peaceful Mind Psychology](#)
- \* [www.alternativebabynames.com](http://www.alternativebabynames.com)
- \* [Wikipedia-Naming ceremony](#)
- \* [United Kingdom Society of Celebrants](#)
- \* [Naming & Baby Blessings – A Life Celebrant – Lou](#)

Introduction & Welcome	Welcome guests & Introduce yourself. State the reason for the gathering and the importance of a Naming Ceremony Describe the importance of a Parent's role to love, nurture, to lead a child to be a good person.
Tribute to Grandparents	Include Grandparents in the ceremony. They can be incorporated into the Candle Ceremony or their participation can be creatively scripted
Reading	A poem or story could be read to set a theme
Introduce Guideparents	Define their role. Celebrant or Parents Invite them forward. Explain why they were chosen
Candle Ceremony	Include the Guideparents and/or Grandparents. Can be used as memorial candle invoking ancestral care or remembrance. The candle can be used to highlight the light and love provided by parents and Guideparents.
2nd Reading	Another poem if appropriate. Poem relevant to the role of Grandparents and ancestors
Guideparents	Expand on their role and ask if they are willing to accept the honour.
Naming Rituals	Perform a ritual to signify the adoption of the name
Name choice	Invite the Parents to state the chosen name. Mention how the name came to be chosen. Explain the meaning of the name An opportunity to attribute other aspects such as astrology, numbers, dates, stones, colours etc.
Baptism (if Included)	Perform a ritual of blessing with water. (Holy Oils are also used in Christenings)
Change of Garments	Replace all or just an item of clothing as a symbol of change or of new life. In a religious ceremony, the new garment would be white e.g. Christening garment
Blessing	Conduct a blessing Ritual of choice. Invite Parents, Guideparents and Grandparents to do likewise.
Signing of the documents	Persons who might sign a certificate as participants or witnesses: ⇒ Parents ⇒ Guideparents ⇒ Grandparents ⇒ Celebrant sign certificates ⇒ All guests
Unity Activity	Hand printing a tree. Planting a real tree Hand fasting
Certificate Presentation	Naming Certificate to Parents and child Each Guideparent Others as an option
Final Declaration	Closing of Ceremony Bell Ringing



Group by Australian Marriage Celebrants (AMC)



*"Find Your Celebrant"*

*Facebook Page*  
**New Find Your Celebrant Facebook Group**

The AMC is thrilled to see our "AMC Find Your Celebrant" Facebook page buzzing with fantastic content from some of our members. A special acknowledgment goes out to Sally Thomas, whose remarkable posts about ideas and special moments have truly enriched the page.

We'd also like to extend a big shoutout to all the members who have been actively engaging with the posts. Your likes, loves, comments, and shares are instrumental in organically expanding our page's reach to a wider audience.

Our objective with this page is to introduce a fresh approach to promoting you, steering clear of conventional "pick me" sales tactics. Instead, our focus is on sharing ideas that can assist couples in their journey to marriage.

Don't forget to share your ideas on the page to help us grow our audience, extend its reach, and enhance your visibility on this platform.



**feedback**

**It's Your Turn!**

Have you enjoyed reading this newsletter? Could you like to add to, or disagree with an article or do you have another idea? We are a community of Celebrants and

learn from each other. It is your turn to have your say and be published in this newsletter. What will you write about in this newsletter?.

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



**Inspire others, & inspire yourself.**

**31st July 2024 AMC Education**

**AI & ChatGTP Introduction - "AI Basics for Celebrants."**

Every month the AMC provides a free online education session for members and you can register via the AMC webpage or via links published in the [AMC Private Members Forum on Facebook](#)

In July you can join Rourke Wolstenholme for an insightful session on "AI Basics for Celebrants." This introductory course will cover the fundamentals of AI, with a special focus on ChatGPT and its potential to streamline your processes as a celebrant. Rourke tells us that she is an expert in AI-driven business solutions, specialising in helping entrepreneurs leverage ChatGPT and other AI tools. Experienced in the wedding industry, she successfully managed her business while raising a baby, she offers courses and services designed to help you automate tasks, enhance productivity, and balance your professional and personal life with ease. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from a seasoned professional and discover how AI can transform your celebrant business!



# NOIM LODGEMENT



A NOIM, or NOM is of course the acronym for a *Notice Of Intended Marriage* which must be lodged

by handing the completed form to a Celebrant, one to 18 months prior to the wedding.

The form of the NOIM has been approved by the Attorney-General and must contain the parties' particulars as required in the approved form and only the current form can be used. These can be downloaded from the AG or BDM websites.

A NSW BDM newsletter implied that some Celebrants are apparently not fully understanding what 'lodgement' means and so not understanding when the one month notice period begins.

The NOIM must of course be signed and witnessed and only then given to the authorised celebrant (Lodged) no earlier than 18 months before, and no later than one month before, the scheduled date of the marriage.

That doesn't mean a couple cannot book a Celebrant before that time frame as it just means the *Notice* must be 'lodged' (*handed to the Celebrant*) within that time period. The NOIM is 'lodged' when the couple hand a signed and witnessed NOIM to a Celebrant and the Celebrant then records the date of receipt on the NOIM.

During Covid, that could be undertaken utilising an audio/video link in that the Celebrant could observe the signing by the couple and then receive the signed NOIM via scan or fax but that ceased at the end of 2023 however this option will soon resume once the new legislation receives Royal Assent and so the option to witnessing via audio/visual will soon return.

The following are NOT lodging a NOIM:

1. Simply completing a form online or entering data into a registry is NOT lodgement – the NOIM, must be signed and witnessed.
2. Handing or sending an unsigned/unwitnessed NOIM to a Celebrant is NOT a Lodgement - the NOIM, must be signed and witnessed.

Entering Data into a Registry of Births Deaths is NOT a lodgement

One of the budget Celebrancy businesses was wrongly advertising '*same day lodgement*' meaning that they upload data to the BDM on the same day it is received. They were obviously confusing data entry with lodgement.

At least one member of the clergy has been postdating NOIMs, insisting wrongly that the date the couple called to make a booking was the beginning of the notice period.

After the Marriage ceremony has taken place, the Celebrant must sign the NOIM to attest to the marriage having taken place and then the Celebrant must submit it, along with the DONLIM and an Official Certificate of Marriage, to the



relevant state Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages within 14 days, for the registration of the marriage.

Where the NOIM is lodged with less than the required notice time a 'Shortening Of Time' may be applied subject to strict conditions which have been covered in an earlier newsletter.

**So just to reiterate and be clear, Section 42 of the *Marriage Act 1961 (Cth)* requires the parties to an intended marriage, to give the authorised celebrant at least one month's written notice prior to the solemnisation of the marriage and this is done by the couple submitting the signed and witnessed Notice Of Intended Marriage (NOIM) to the authorised celebrant (Lodged) no earlier than 18 months before, and no later than one month before, the date of the marriage.**

The Notice period commences at that Lodgement and so **DOES NOT** commence when the couple:

- book the celebrant or venue
- pay a fee.
- issue out invitations or post on social media

make an Engagement announcement

Therefore, the date that is entered on the NOIM for '*date notice is received*' by the Celebrant can logically ONLY be on or after the date that the parties to the marriage signed the NOIM.

**Signatures cannot be postdated.**

A notice expires after 18 months, and a marriage may not be solemnised if the NOIM was received more than 18 months before the date of the proposed marriage. If the NOIM is scheduled to expire prior to the marriage taking place, best practice is to prepare a new NOIM, which is signed, witnessed and lodged, usually, one month before the expiry of the first NOIM so that the minimum one-month notice of the new NOIM, overlaps the expiring NOIM so as to ensures there is no break in the notice period.

Section 42(3) of the *Marriage Act 1961* and Section 4.4 of the '*Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for authorised celebrants*' does allow for a NOIM to be accepted by when there is only one witnessed signature if it is not practical for the second party to sign at the same time. The celebrant may witness the second party sign the NOIM, prior to the solemnisation however, celebrants are advised to use caution when accepting a NOIM with only one party's signature and should establish that the party who has not yet signed, is in agreement.

A frequent question is "who can witness a NOIM?"

You will find the answer in the Act, Guidelines and on the NOIM itself.



## OPD SCENARIO



Celebrant Phil Timbrell has been a great contributor to this newsletter and has also been posting hypothetical scenarios & questions on the AMC Members Forum to educate and inform through discussion. His scenarios will also assist with the 2024 OPD.

In late May, he offered a real scenario that was relayed to an OPD instructor in 2018 as follows:

*A couple sign a NOIM together with the celebrant. The groom marked ‘never validly married’ on the NOIM but afterwards calls the celebrant to arrange a private meeting in which he changes his marital status to ‘divorced’ and produced evidence of that divorce. The NOIM was altered and both the groom and celebrant initialled the change however the groom did not reveal this to the bride or that he had been previously married & divorced. The Groom did not want the Bride to know and the Celebrant conducted the ceremony as scheduled without informing to the bride.*

*It was only when the official BDM certificate arrived after the wedding, that the bride was enlightened and was furious with her new husband and planned legal action against the celebrant.*

Phil’s question was:

**‘Does the celebrant have a case to answer?’**

Before you continue, consider the scenario and decide what you would do in such a circumstance.

What is your answer?

After you have considered your response, you will find an answer **on page 08.**

## MARKETING TIPS

1. Your branding is what you present, but your brand is how others see you and so look through the client lens, not your own, when preparing advertising
2. Quench a thirst for difference – show how you are different
3. Social media limits SEO exposure and leaves you just a click away from competitors and so have a Website to keep clients on your page
4. Be authentic and ensure content is well written
5. Use the language found in reviews, in your advertising and webpage
6. Key words should be words that searchers will enter into a search engine but not excessively repeated (see reviews)
7. Invite reviews especially if you are new– not just after the event but at anytime in the process e.g. why did you choose me? & what is your experience so far?
8. If you have a four-line review, each line can be used separately at four different locations on your webpage, as a quote from a couple
9. Have specific pages for different offerings
10. The more webpages you have, the more exposure you have
11. Avoid dropdown menus
12. Prices on your webpage don’t give context and so ensure that there is a differentiation to show why choose you,
13. Don’t sell what you do but why they should choose you
14. Don’t stand on the words ‘professional and quality’ as you should not be in the business unless you are a professional presenting quality, rather show your authority and expertise. A humble person does not tell you they are humble while the skills of a person should be obvious.
15. When you narrow the niche, you hone the client target. Advertising to a specific niche will get you more bookings in the niche.
16. Join industry associations for mentoring and to keep up to date. It may also result overflow work from others.
17. Show up at meetings and conferences to learn and extend your network by being in the space, letting people see you, and hear from you.
18. Network with others in related industries e.g. jewellers, venues, musicians, florists

• [www.BrianLawrence.com](http://www.BrianLawrence.com)

• <https://youtu.be/etuhqO7pal0?si=5LZxkhxwY756VdWf>

**ENGAGEMENT RING:** Where do I put my engagement ring during my marriage ceremony?

Wear the ring on your right hand or have someone hold it for you. If you want to wear your engagement ring for the reception, you can put it on after the ceremony. For Jewish weddings, it’s fine to wear your engagement ring and then exchange stone-free wedding bands if you want to keep with tradition. Also remember: The band is usually worn closest to your heart on your left hand.

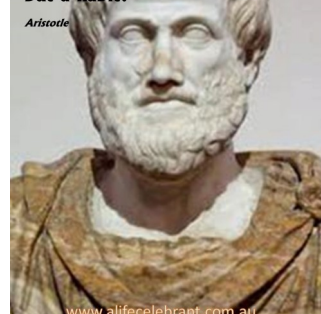
[www.alifecelibrant.com.au](http://www.alifecelibrant.com.au)

pic from <https://www.brides.com/photos/oval-cut-ring-with-baguette-side-stones>

**We are what we repeatedly do.**

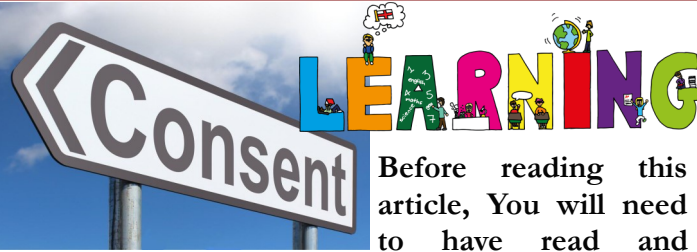
**Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.**

*Aristotle*



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

## OPD ANSWER



Before reading this article, You will need to have read and

considered the scenario mentioned on page 10 and hopefully you were able to answer the question posed but don't be too disheartened if you were unsure because a number of celebrants struggled with the subject despite its importance and so you should be congratulated that you have made the extra effort.

There are several aspects to consider in the scenario beyond Phil Timbrell's end question of *'Does the celebrant have a case to answer?'* because it is not just the celebrant who could face ramifications.

**Firstly** we must consider if the celebrant was in breach of the law and acted in good faith. If in breach of the law, what penalty might apply under the Act, Regulations, and the Code of Practice.

**Secondly**, the scenario is actually in respect to the Bride's civil action of suing the Celebrant for failing in his/her duties, resulting in emotional and/or financial harm to the Bride.

**Thirdly**, was the Celebrant solely at fault.

1. The groom knowingly signed a NOIM containing false information. That is an offence under Section 104 of the Marriage Act and section 137.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth).
2. Asking the Celebrant to be complicit in the deception, is inviting the Celebrant to be a party to the fraudulent and criminal act.
3. Changing the NOIM does not remove the original offence committed by the Groom but perhaps mitigates it somewhat however it may not necessarily exonerate the Celebrant.
4. Concealing information from the bride is not only a breach of trust on the Groom's part, but means that the Bride did not have full information and so there was a lack of 'informed consent'. A marriage is void if the consent of either of the parties is not real consent.
5. In solemnising the marriage while knowing that there was a lack of informed consent and knowing there was a deliberate deception, the Celebrant was in breach of Section 100 of the Marriage Act.

Hence of course, the celebrant, in breaking the law, does have a case to answer at law and so presumably would also have a case to answer in the civil matter instigated by the Bride. The penalty at law may be a fine, and/or deregistration, and/or Imprisonment but the penalty in the civil matter would be for the court to decide.



We are left to wonder though, if the marriage was discontinued and what penalties the groom actually faced. The legal bills alone would have been huge.

## Longest Married

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the couple who are currently the longest married are 110 year-old Julio Cesar Mora Tapia and 104-year-old Waldramina Maclovia Quinteros



Reyes who have been married for 79 years. They shared that *"The secret formula = love + maturity + mutual respect,"*. Originally from Ecuador, Julio Cesar, born 10th March 1910 and Waldramina born 16th October, 1915, met during her school vacation when she visited her sister, whose husband, was Julio Cesar's cousin and lived in the same building.

Waldramina found in Julio Cesar a loving man with a young spirit and great literary potential who captivated her with his beautiful poetry.

Julio Cesar fell in love with Waldramina because of her beauty, long conversations and her big heart combined with a firm character.

They married seven years later on 7th February 1941 in the oldest church in Quito, La Iglesia de El Belén, in an intimate and secret celebration because the relatives of the bride and groom did not agree with the marriage.

They dedicated their lives to teaching and went on to become the parents of five children, all of whom achieved college degrees. They believe education is the basis for a developed society.

Though their oldest son sadly died at the age of 58, today they have a huge family of 11 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and 9 great-great-grandchildren. They believe that family unity is everything and that life is better when the foundations of the family are built on love and respect. They are quoted in the Guinness Book of Records article as saying:

*"Respect, compassion and consideration with which we maintained our relationship was very important; we never argued or fought. There were disagreements, but they were not noticeable to any of our children who also deserved respect and love."*

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2020/8/ecuadorian-spouses-become-the-worlds-oldest-married-couple>





## Attorney-General's Department and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meetings

The AMC and other associations and networks representatives, meet with the Marriage Registrar and staff at the Marriage Law and Celebrants Section (MLCS) in Canberra at least twice a year.

Originally attended exclusively by Celebrant Association representatives, the current Registrar elected to include broader networks to gain a wider perspective. The meetings are an opportunity to engage with AGED representatives and other participants in relation to matters of interest and agenda items.

Our AMC President, Annemarie McDonnell and AMC Rep to MLCS Brian Brennan

Whilst the AMC representatives make notes at each meeting, official Minutes of Meetings can be found at:

- <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/attorney-generals-department-and-marriage-celebrant-associationsnetworks-meeting-minutes>
- [AGED and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meeting Minutes – Wednesday 6 December 2023 \[PDF 198.86 KB\]](#)
- [AGED and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meeting Minutes – Thursday 25 May 2023 \[PDF 182.67 KB\]](#)
- [AGED and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meeting Minutes – Thursday 23 June 2022 \[PDF 140.92 KB\]](#)
- [AGED and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meeting Minutes – Wednesday 24 November 2021 \[PDF 283.64 KB\]](#)
- [AGED and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meeting Minutes – Thursday 20 May 2021 \[PDF 344.32 KB\]](#)

It should however be pointed out that the publication of minutes is not immediate and at the time of this publication, the last minutes listed were for December 2023.

At the May 2024 meeting, those gathered, worked through lunch, until before 3:30pm, covering an extensive agenda. The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for mid-November.

### Attorney General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Act 2024

At the time of the May meeting, the Attorney General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Bill 2023 had not yet become law but it was of course discussed. Given that the Attorney General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Act 2024 has since come into law, the discussion of May 2024 is now redundant and so not included in this article. (see other articles on the matter).



Australian Government  
Attorney-General's Department



### Recommendations Provided By Working Celebrants

The Registrar emphasised the importance of recommendations provided by working celebrants as they hold considerable weight with her Department and are considered when decisions are made.

The Registrar emphasised the importance of receiving a strong response to surveys issued to Celebrants as each survey helps shape the delivery of services by the Department in areas such as OPD and platform access. The next survey will probably be sent out with the registration fee reminder and will include questions regarding pre-registration training including and if resources prepared the applicant adequately? The Registrar emphasised that the Department is more interested in celebrants having suitable knowledge of legal requirements rather than the training for style or business management ability. The Department is working on the platform and delivery method.

### Happily Ever After Pamphlet

The Registrar is confident that the new pamphlet will be ready soon.

Knowledge testing during application

The test that is currently used to assess applicant knowledge when applying for registration is currently under review and in future will be a stronger test to ensure a greater depth of knowledge in successful registrations.

### Consent Training

The results to date in OPD on consent had only 25% of respondents getting it correct on the first attempt while 75% required repeated attempts creating the concern that there is increased risk that inexperienced or inattentive celebrants could break the law and could also be sued by couples if they got it wrong. Actual determination of consent can be difficult to achieve. There was discussion around tactics to determine actual

## Attorney-General's Department and Marriage Celebrant Associations/Networks Meetings



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consent and if a party was under coercive pressure. There were recommendations from attendees (including the AMC representatives) that the DONLIM include a consent indicator which would assist in protecting celebrant and that is under consideration.

Associations were asked to forward any scenarios outlining consent determination so that they could be considered for next years training.

### AMC Suggestions

- 1) AMC asked that consideration be given to making membership of a professional Association membership compulsory as a means of ensuring but the concept was declined as the Registrar does not have the authority to introduce or enforce it.
- 2) AMC also asked that the AG Department inform the AMC when members resigned from Celebrancy or were deregistered;
- 3) AMC also suggested that Consent training to be made separate but additional to the OPD as a compulsory annual training for all celebrants while another association requested that OPD be returned to a requirement for 5 hours of training delivered by an Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The Registrar made the point that any degradation to professional skills was due to many things and not OPD alone.
- 4) Annemarie McDonell (our President) recommended that the shortening of time box on the NOIM be moved below the confirmation of ceremony component to reduce the number of celebrants forgetting to complete this component prior to submission to BDMs. Under consideration.

### The Celebrant checklist

The Celebrant checklist is being updated and will be available on the AGED portal.

### Shortening of time

Shortening of time required for the NOIM has been raised repeatedly by Associations. There was suggestion that "super celebrants" i.e. those selected for the duty (maybe those also holding Justice of the Peace qualifications) could be utilised to provide approval for shortening of the notice period however State/Territory laws apply to the authority appointment. There may also be unwanted ramifications by families who could sue the celebrant due to a loss of bequests in pre-existent wills that are made redundant by marriage. Some examples were given where this has occurred and the Registrar and her team took note.

### Reduction in Notice Period

The Association of Humanistic Celebrants requested that the minimum period for submission of a NOIM be brought down to 3 days in parity with New Zealand. Registrar will look into it.

### NOIM Review

The list of authorised witnesses on the NOIM is still under reviewed.

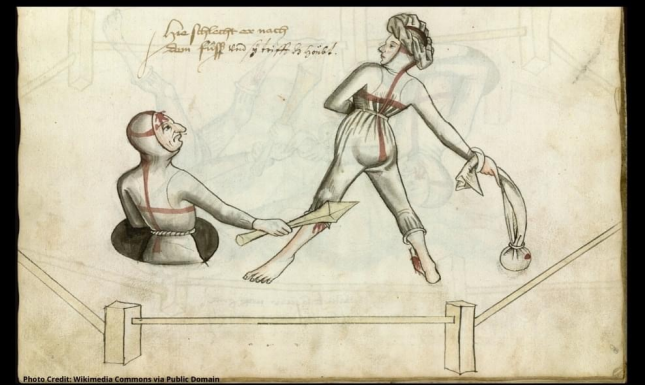
Associations recommended that the requirement for parental names on the NOIM be removed.

The Registrar directed her team to review the NOIM in total and to consider the removal of this requirement however pointed out that they would have to consult with the BDMs of each State and Territory as well.

### OPD questions

Some discussion revolved around members of Associations taking a team approach to answering questions. The Registrar agreed with AMC that the important objective was for celebrants to learn and therefore discussions worked.

In medieval Germany married couples could legally settle their disputes by fighting a Marital Duel. To make sure the fight was fair, the man had to fight from inside a pit with his arm tied behind his back (in some instances). The woman was free to move and was armed with a sack filled with rocks. **Whoever lost was killed.**





## Attorney-General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Act 2024



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There has been an amendments to the Marriage Act. You will have received an email on 12/6/2024 from the Marriage Law and Celebrants Section (MLCS) within the Attorney-General's department, advising of a very important update.

**The Attorney-General's Portfolio Miscellaneous Measures Bill 2023 passed both house of 28/5/2024 and received Royal Assent on 11 June 2024. It became law as Act 41, on 12 June 2024.**

Over the past months, the Australian Government has been progressing the bill before parliament to update, clarify, and improve the intended operation of legislation administered by the Attorney-General, including the *Marriage Act 1961*.

The changes sought to clarify and improve the operation of the Marriage Celebrants Program and include a new requirement for celebrants to meet separately and in person to ensure safeguards for real consent to a marriage are maintained, and the ability to witness the signing of NOIMs in Australia online.

### Summary of amendments to the Marriage Act

#### Remote Witnessing Is Back!

The Marriage Act will be amended to permanently provide couples with the option to have their Notice of Intended Marriage (NOIM) witnessed remotely, via audio-visual link, as well as in person.

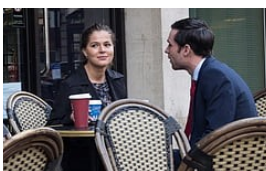


**Note:** *The requirements for authorised witnesses will remain unchanged and location-dependent. If the couple is in Australia then the person remotely witnessing the NOIM (which can include an authorised celebrant) must also be in Australia. If the couple is outside Australia, the authorised witness (which cannot be a celebrant) must also be outside Australia. To be clear, you cannot witness online a NOIM for a person or couple outside Australia.*

#### Separate Meetings In Person With Each Party

The Marriage Act will require an authorised celebrant to meet separately and in person with each party to the marriage before the marriage is solemnised. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that each party is freely and voluntarily consenting to the marriage.

A separate meeting needs to occur in the absence of the other party to the marriage and in a culturally safe environment – but this does not mean you need to meet alone with a party. Other persons can attend with the party's permission.



The timing of the separate meetings is at the discretion of the celebrant and the couple. It

can occur at any time up to and including the day of the marriage, providing it occurs before the marriage is solemnised. Additional guidance material will be provided to assist you to meet these requirements.

#### Evidence of Date and Place of Birth

The amendments re-order the acceptable evidence of date and place of birth under paragraph 42(1)(b) of the Marriage Act. They clarify that where it is impracticable (practically impossible) for the party to the marriage to obtain a certificate or official extract of an entry in an official register and they do not have a passport, only then should they rely on a Commonwealth Statutory Declaration to declare to the best of their knowledge, their date and place of birth.

The term impracticable does not mean inconvenient. For example, it is not impracticable for a person born in Australia to apply to the state or territory Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages for a copy of their birth certificate, or except in special circumstances, for overseas born persons to apply to the appropriate authorities in their country of birth.

#### Transfer of the NOIM

The amendments also clarify the circumstances when a NOIM can be transferred to another authorised celebrant include at the request of the marrying couple. This is in addition to transfers due to the death, absence or illness of the celebrant or where it is otherwise impracticable for a celebrant to solemnise the marriage.

#### Other measures

Other amendments include:

- the introduction of deputy registrars for the Marriage Celebrants Program
- extending the timeframes for considering an application for registration as an authorised celebrant
- providing for the refund of the application fee only if an applicant does not have the requisite qualification or skills referred to in the Marriage Act
- clarifying that a celebrant must be physically present to solemnise a marriage, together with the parties and 2 witnesses
- confirms that a celebrant can only be registered or authorised under one subdivision of the Marriage Act at a time (this applies only if the person's application is received after the commencement of Schedule 3, Part 7 i.e., 28 days after the Act receives Royal Assent).

#### Questions

The Marriage Law and Celebrants Section (MLCS) is available to assist you with any questions you may have about these amendments.

**See MLCS advice on the following pages & Coordinator's Comments on the back page**



## Separate Meetings

### Your obligations under the *Marriage Act 1961*

#### The following advice was issued to Celebrants on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024 by the MLCS.

From **12 June 2024** all authorised marriage celebrants are required under the *Marriage Act 1961* to meet with each party to the marriage **separately** and **in person** before they solemnise the marriage. This applies to **all legal marriages** and **all authorised celebrants**, including Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants, ministers of religion of a recognised denomination and State and Territory officials authorised to solemnise marriage.

#### Why?

- Real consent is the cornerstone of the Marriage Act.
- As has always been the case, you – as an authorised marriage celebrant – must be satisfied that each party to the marriage is providing real consent before the marriage is solemnised. This obligation has not changed.
- A court may find a marriage to be void where the consent of either of the parties is not real consent.
- Under the *Marriage Act 1961*, a person's consent to a marriage is not real consent if it was obtained by duress or fraud; a party is mistaken as to the identity of the other party or the nature of the ceremony performed; or a party does not have mental capacity to understand the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony.
- 'Duress' may include coercion or threats including psychological or emotional pressure.
- A separate meeting with a party to establish real consent is not new, and has been a long-standing principle in *The Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for authorised celebrants* where any concerns existed about consent. [1]
- A separate meeting in person with each party to the marriage before the marriage is solemnised is intended to maintain safeguards for establishing real consent.
- Celebrants should be aware that it is an offence to cause another person to enter into a forced marriage. [2]

#### When?

- A separate meeting with each party must take place before a marriage is solemnised, regardless of when the NOIM was received (unless you have already met separately with each party to establish real consent).
- If the NOIM has been transferred to a new celebrant, the new celebrant must also meet separately with each party. This is necessary because the celebrant who solemnises the marriage must comply personally with all legal requirements.
- **The timing and duration of a separate meeting with each party is at the discretion of the celebrant and the marrying couple, provided it takes place before the marriage is solemnised. Suggested opportunities may include a convenient time after receiving the NOIM; when signing the Declaration of No Legal**

#### **Impediment to Marriage; or on the day of the wedding.**

- If you have any concerns about consent at any stage you should meet with the parties separately and at the earliest opportunity. Meeting in advance of the wedding day will assist the celebrant to manage any concerns about real consent appropriately.
- Real consent may change over time and celebrants should exercise sound judgement about whether or not to solemnise a marriage.
- Circumstances may arise on the day of the wedding that may impact on real consent. For example, if either of the parties appear intoxicated or otherwise unable to provide real consent at that time, or for any other reason including medical issues.

#### Where and How?

- A separate meeting provides you with an opportunity to check in with each party to establish if they are entering into the marriage **voluntarily and freely**, and with an understanding of the binding legal nature of marriage. This involves the type of discussions you would already be familiar with in your role as an authorised celebrant.
- There is no specific set of questions or words you need to use to satisfy yourself about real consent. Open-ended questions often allow the party to express how they feel about their upcoming wedding.
- **A separate meeting needs to take place in the absence of the other party to the marriage. You need to speak in person and separately with each party – but this does not mean you have to meet alone with the party. The party may choose to bring a trusted person.**
- For privacy and safety reasons, do not contact third parties such as family members, interpreters etc, without the express consent of the party.
- Separate meetings are to take place in a culturally appropriate context and in line with the preferences of the party, including as to the location of the meeting. It can be a public setting provided the privacy of the conversation can be maintained. This could be a public space agreed to by the party, such as a coffee shop or similar venue.
- If another person attends the meeting with a party, the celebrant should have regard to whether their presence appears to be coercive and take this into account in their decision whether or not to solemnise the marriage. You should not say anything that may expose the party to risk. Instead, consider following-up with the party by telephone if you have concerns.
- Remember other people may read your emails, text messages or written communications, or may listen to



## Separate Meetings

### Your obligations under the *Marriage Act 1961*



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your voice messages. If you need assistance about how to proceed you should contact the expert support services listed below.

- **It is recommended the celebrant should keep a record of the meetings, who was present, the factors you considered and the conclusion you reached on the question of real consent. This means if any questions arise at a later date you have a record of your decision-making process. This is important because celebrants may be called upon to give evidence in court as to the consent of the parties.**
- As has always been the case, if you have any concerns whatsoever about real consent and consequent validity of a marriage, either before or on the day, you should not solemnise the marriage. You may consider offering a non-binding commitment ceremony and later solemnisation, depending on circumstances.
- **Please note:** It is important that you always act in the best interests of a party who may be at risk, by being mindful of their safety as well as your own.
- The following additional resources are available to support authorised celebrants and vulnerable parties.

### Resources

#### What are the signs of a forced marriage?

The crime of forced marriage not only applies to legally recognised marriages but to cultural or religious ceremonies and registered relationships.

If someone is in, or at risk of a forced marriage, they may find it hard to tell someone about their situation.

**A combination of the following signs may indicate that a person is in a forced marriage, or at risk of being made to enter into a forced marriage.**

**Some of these signs may not be immediately obvious to an authorised celebrant but could provide a guide about the kinds of questions to ask the couple (or the person).**

- Have a family history of elder siblings leaving education early, marrying early or indicating concerns of an early marriage
- Exhibit signs of depression, self-harm, attempted suicide, panic attacks, social isolation or substance abuse
- Have high level of control and restrictions exercised by family / community members over all aspects of life in and outside of the home e.g. surveillance, always accompanied, limited or no control of finances, limited or no control over life decisions, education and career choices
- Have communications monitored or restricted
- Show evidence of family or domestic violence within the family unit
- Show evidence of running away from home or isolation from the community

- Express concern regarding an upcoming family holiday or overseas travel
- Make a sudden announcement they are engaged
- Express feelings of shame or dishonour on the family if family / community expectations are not met
- Show evidence of economic or dowry abuse including family members or others seeking to gain financially from a proposed marriage or engagement; ongoing demands for cash or material goods; threats made when financial obligations or arrangements are not met.
- Demonstrate feelings of conflict or concern for the ramifications if they do not go ahead with an agreed marriage / engagement
- Have intergenerational and cultural conflict within the home
- Express concern of physical or psychological violence for not fulfilling family / community expectations.
- Arranged marriages are different to forced marriages. While an arranged marriage involves the spouse being introduced by a third party or family member, it requires the consent of both parties, who can agree or refuse to marry. The Marriage Act does not prevent a person from consenting to marry another person that they have not met prior to the marriage ceremony.

#### How can I help a person at risk of forced marriage to stay safe?

**It is important that you always act in the best interests of a person at risk of a forced marriage, by being mindful of their safety as well as your own.**

If an authorised celebrant forms a view that one of the parties may be under duress or otherwise not freely and fully consenting, they should attempt to discuss the matter with the party concerned in the absence of the other party or any family members to determine whether they consent to the marriage.

**When seeking assistance, you can help protect a person at risk of a forced marriage, and yourself, by:**

- dialling Triple Zero (000) if you have immediate concerns for your safety, the safety of another person, or there is an emergency
- contacting the AFP or a specialist community organisation
- ensuring you do not attempt to set up a meeting with the person and their family or community members to discuss the situation, or contact family or community members, if you do not have the express permission of the person

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## Separate Meetings

### Your obligations under the *Marriage Act 1961*



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- remembering that other people may read your emails, text messages or other written communications
- providing the party with information about forced marriage and services that can help them
- meeting in a safe and private place, and
- if using an interpreter to communicate with a person suspected to be at risk of forced marriage, consider that the interpreter may know the person, their family or their community.
- For more information on **forced marriage** see the '[People smuggling and human trafficking](#)' page of the Attorney-General's Department website.

### Seek assistance

The Forced Marriage Community Pack, available on the Attorney-General's Department website at:

- [Forced marriage | Attorney-General's Department](#) provides information and resources on forced marriage and is available in a range of languages.

**Marriage celebrants may wish to download fact sheets or the small fold away booklets so that they can be provided to the person suspected to be at risk of forced marriage, if it is safe to do so.**

**It is important to refer the person to the right place where they can get appropriate advice and assistance.**

Care should be taken to ensure that the person suspected to be at risk is not put in danger.

- ⇒ If you have immediate concerns for your safety, the safety of another person, or there is an emergency, call Triple Zero (000).
- ⇒ If there is no immediate risk of harm and indicators of forced marriage are present, call 131 AFP (131 237) or
- ⇒ complete the online report a crime form on the human trafficking page of the AFP website at:

- [Human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices \(including forced marriage\) information report - AFP](#)

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) can provide initial advice to people who are in, or at risk of a forced marriage, including where a person needs help to make sure he or she won't be taken overseas. The AFP can also refer victims for support, including safe accommodation, financial support, legal advice and counselling.

Initial support is available for victims even where they don't want to assist with an investigation or prosecution. In cases where the victim is a child, the AFP will always act in their best interests.

You can also provide anonymous information about criminal activity to:

- ⇒ Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or
- ⇒ [www.crimestoppers.com.au](http://www.crimestoppers.com.au).

## Other Resources

- ◇ [My Blue Sky](#) is an easy to use, non-government website dedicated to preventing and addressing forced marriage in Australia. The website provides people in, or at risk of, forced marriage with important information and links to support services, as well as useful resources for frontline responders, service providers and the general community.

For free, confidential legal advice about forced marriage, you can call My Blue Sky's national forced marriage helpline on (02) 9514 8115. The My Blue Sky helpline operates Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm AEST), with an out of hours recorded message. You can also get help by emailing:

- ⇒ [help@mybluesky.org.au](mailto:help@mybluesky.org.au) or
- ⇒ sending an SMS to 0481 070 844.

- ◇ The National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service is a free 24/7 confidential telephone and online counselling service, staffed by professional counsellors to assist any person who has experienced, or is at risk of family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault. You can call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit the [National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service](#) website.

**The following specialist community organisations may also be able to provide help and advice:**

- ◇ [Anti-Slavery Australia](#)  
Tel: 02 9514 9662 | Email: [antislavery@uts.edu.au](mailto:antislavery@uts.edu.au)
- ◇ [Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights](#)  
Tel: 03 9481 3000
- ◇ [The Freedom Partnership—Salvation Army](#)  
Tel: 02 9211 579  
Email: [endslavery@aue.salvationarmy.org.au](mailto:endslavery@aue.salvationarmy.org.au)
- ◇ You may also wish to seek advice from the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia: see:
  - \* [Family violence: Overview | Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia \(fcfcoa.gov.au\)](#),
  - or
  - \* a family solicitor at your closest Legal Aid office.
- ◇ The [Translating and Interpreting Service](#) (TIS National) can be contacted on 131 450.

### **References used by MLCS in this advice**

- [1] See *Guidelines* at paragraphs 8.6.1 and 11.1.2.
- [2] It is an offence under section 270.7B of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to engage in conduct that causes another person to enter into a forced marriage – penalty 7 years imprisonment or 9 years if an aggravated offence.





### *Who can claim home office expenses?*

Your eligibility to claim depends on many variables. Exploring the [Australian Tax Office \(ATO\) Home Office expenses](#) can help you determine what applies to you.

You may be eligible if:

- your primary work function is conducted at home
- you work remotely some of the time, or
- you worked from home for a portion of the tax year.

If you're a business owner, the ATO has different taxation and deduction rules. [Learn more about business insurance and tax deductibility.](#)

To claim working from home expenses, you must:

- be working from home to fulfil your employment duties, not just carrying out minimal tasks, such as occasionally checking emails or taking calls
- incur additional running expenses as a result of working from home
- have records that show you incur these expenses.

To calculate your deduction for working from home expenses, you must use one of the methods set out below.

Where you incur running expenses for both private and work purposes, you need to apportion your deduction. You can only claim the work-related portion as a deduction.

### *What work from home expenses may be deductible?*

If you're working from home, many common operating costs may be tax deductible. These can include:

- electricity expenses associated with working
- phone and internet expenses
- computer and stationery consumables, and
- home office equipment, including computers, printers, office furniture and furnishings.

For home office equipment and furniture, you may be able to claim either:

- the total cost of items up to \$300, or
- the decline in value for items over \$300.

You can only claim the portion of expenses paid that directly relates to earning your income. You'll need to calculate how many hours are spent working relative to the item's cost.

For example, you can divide your electricity bill between

household (private) usage and work. The ATO provides formulas to support this. If you're using a tax agent or accountant, they'll be able to help with these calculations so you can claim correctly.

Alternatively, the ATO allows a (revised) [fixed rate method](#) as an option from 1 July 2022. The fixed rate method is a lot simpler and allows you to claim 67 cents per hour you work from home for included expenses like:

- data and internet
- mobile and home phone usage
- electricity and gas
- computer consumables (e.g. printer ink), and
- stationery.

If you choose to apply the fixed rate method, you can't then claim a separate deduction for any expenses covered by that method (no double-counting!). If you choose this method you can still claim a separate deduction for things described above not covered by those included expenses such as:

- the decline in value of home office equipment,
- repairs and maintenance of that equipment, and
- cleaning costs (in the case of a dedicated home office).

You can visit the [ATO website](#) to learn more about both methods for working from home expenses.

- [Eligibility to claim](#)
- [Additional running expenses](#)
- [Choosing a method to calculate your claim](#)
- [Prior year work from home methods](#)
- [Expenses you can't claim](#)

### *Keep your receipts for tax time*

Keep a record of your expenses, as the ATO may ask you to prove your work-related claims. Receipts are also handy if you're sorting out your Home & Contents Insurance for the first time, as they provide a good estimate of the value you need to cover.

You can store your receipts and records digitally. Consider keeping photos or scans on a cloud-based storage service.

**TIP:** The ATO's preferred choice of communications now is via "myGov". If the ATO is attempting to contact you, it will likely be in relation to something already sent to your myGov account by the ATO.

Ref:

- [How to Claim a Tax Deduction on Home Office Expenses | GIO](#)
- [Working from home expenses | Australian Taxation Office \(ato.gov.au\)](#)

# CELEBRANT SNAPSHOT

Regular readers will know that every month I try to feature a Celebrant, sharing in their experience and different perspective. Each Celebrant has a unique experience, ideas and values and so we can find value in each person's story. We discover that as individuals we are alike in many ways but different in others.

New Celebrants are very reluctant, even shy, to contribute their stories despite their importance but we are very fortunate in this edition, to be able to read about the journey of a Funeral Celebrant now expanding her business to include Marriage Celebrancy. It is a beautiful read. Enjoy (oh and its her birthday)

## Dena D'Antone

denadantone@gmail.com

[https://www.instagram.com/blueangelcelebrancyservices/#](https://www.instagram.com/blueangelcelebrancyservices/)

Hello everyone,

My name is Dena D'Antone. I am studying to become an authorised marriage celebrant having already trained as a funeral celebrant, obtaining my funeral and memorial ceremony specific qualification. Once I am given the authorisation from the Attorney Generals Department, I will build a website.

I am located in Leumeah which is near Campbelltown NSW, but I service a wide variety of areas across South Western Sydney and Camden. Currently, my business name is **Blue Angel Celebrancy**. This name is my mums legacy. I am quite spiritual and after she died, we would see spots of blue food colouring in our kitchen when none was being used, or a blue bird following us as we walked. I believe that she is nearby when I see an unusual amount of blue. Maybe that's a comfort thing that I hold onto, but I like to think of Mum as my blue angel.



It's hence a bit of a unique story as to what inspired me to become a funeral celebrant.

In 2017, my mother-in-law passed away, followed by my own Mum in 2018 and my best family friends in 2019 and 2021.

Let's just say I understand the brevity of life and therefore, I want to do a variety of different things with mine, because let's face it, I might be here well into my 90's, but, as the death of my dear friends have unfortunately shown, we just don't know. Doing 9-5 hours, five days per week as I did up until early last year, just wasn't for me anymore. I wasn't happy and I didn't feel like I had much of my life to myself after long workdays. So I took a leap of faith. I gave up full time work, took my long service leave and started to meet funeral directors so that I could become a funeral celebrant.



**BLUE ANGEL**

FUNERAL CELEBRANCY SERVICES

My break into the business has been slow, but I have determination and will persevere. Since starting in the business, I have met some long-term celebrants who I think are fantastic. I learn from them and respect them greatly. At some point in time along my journey, each of them serves as role models or mentors for me, which I appreciate. The same applies to some of the funeral directors I have met, who are just such inspirational and wonderful people. What a perfect way to make new connections and friends.

You may ask why funeral celebrancy in particular? Well, before I started in this business, I spent 30 years in the welfare and disability industry. Thinking about the wellbeing of people and caring about them just comes naturally to me and it's something I love. Hence, I have compassion, I am organised and creative writing is one of my hobbies. It's a perfect mix for the role and it's something I've wanted to do for quite a few years now. I was also part of Toastmasters for about five years and held a vice presidents role for a while there. As a result, public speaking is something that I have become comfortable with.

My Certificate IV in Celebrancy course is fully online and I have had challenges with my RTO, so I might have done a few things differently, but hindsight is a wonderful thing. I'm finding getting my work marked arduous, but again, I persevere. What is it they say: *"never a mistake, always a lesson"*.

Finally, I'm really liking being a member of AMC. I will keep on renewing as especially the get togethers and the guest speakers are very worthwhile.

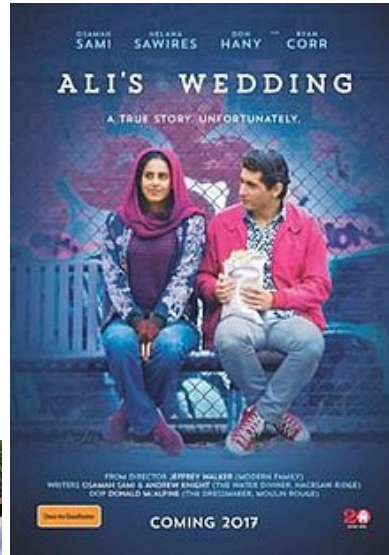
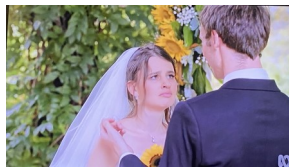
Let me conclude by expressing gratitude to each and every Funeral Director and celebrant I've connected with and each family served who have been a part of my journey thus far.

I will end with a quote of inspiration from Dale Carnegie. I chose this quote because I think putting our best foot forward is always important.

*the best possible way to prepare for tomorrow is to concentrate with all your intelligence, all your enthusiasm, on doing today's work superbly today. That is the only possible way you can prepare for the future."*







According to the IMB, synopsis, this is a romantic comedy in which, a white lie spirals out of control, and a neurotic, naive, musically gifted Muslim Iraqi cleric's eldest son must follow through with an arranged marriage, even though he's madly in love with an Australian born-Lebanese girl.

That however is very much understated as this award winning and engaging movie is based

on the true story of Iraqi born Osamah Sami who is an award-winning Australian actor, writer, and comedian and who actually performs the lead role of Ali, in this captivating story.

For Celebrants we are able to incidentally explore a range of aspects including how a marriage might be arranged and/or forced but still have the appearance of consent; We also get a peak into middle eastern wedding rituals and broader cultural aspects including the struggle of individuals and cultural groups adapting to western culture in Australia and so we learn about diversity while the story characters learn about acceptance.

## Love on the Spectrum

### Series 2, episode 5

This is a wonderful documentary series on ABC iView that follows young adults who are on the autism spectrum as they explore the unpredictable world of love, dating and relationships. Viewing from the start of the two seasons is a must and is addictive. You may enjoy it more than any romance movie you've ever seen, simply because of its sincerity of heart. This program beautifully, respectfully and gently takes you on the journey with young people as they meet for the first time perhaps even date for the very first time, and some do fall in love. There was one complaint that the show was somehow condescending but it is so very far from that as it normalises neurodivergence. This is so very far removed from the era when people with disabilities might have been locked away or prevented from forming relationships or even forcibly sterilised. It is frightening that that used to occur in Australia. A positive offshoot is also that some of the participants were so well liked by so many that they have gone on to other programs. Michael Theo for example has since performed the lead role in the award winning TV series Austin, also available for streaming. The first



Michael Theo

wedding in *Love on the Spectrum*, occurs in Series 2, episode 5 and you get to see how and why a didgeridoo might be incorporated into a ceremony and you even get a glimpse of the Celebrant.



## COMPASS—GOODBYE MY DOG

### Series 38 Goodbye My Dog

Compass is a weekly TV program of immense interest to Celebrants as it is devoted to providing information about faith, values, ethics, and religion from across the globe, hence it includes diverse rituals and practices.. *Compass* airs on Sunday night on ABC TV at 6.30pm and is repeated on Wednesday at 1:30pm and of course, as per the link above, can be found on ABC iView on demand.

This episode follows three families as they honour and treasure the last precious days with their beloved dogs.

Whilst this episode discusses aspects of grief, the only ceremony is a religious service that includes a blessing for dying dogs. Understanding grief is always of great importance to Celebrants and knowing some may wish a memorial of funeral for a furry family member is also of importance.





## Norse -Viking Weddings

Whether it is an influence from the Game of Thrones, Vikings or any one of the many TV series on Netflix and other streaming services that explored the Viking culture, many couples have developed a love of Nordic traditions which come from Scandinavia including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, or the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland, which are often referred to simply as a "Viking Wedding," which were not only a celebration of love between two individuals, but also a celebration of the joining of two families. Viking weddings were known for their grandeur and festivities, which often lasted for a week.

A modern Viking wedding ceremony is all about celebrating love and commitment in a way that's meaningful and unique to the couple and their commitment to each other.

The Norse people have a rich and complex wedding culture filled with beautiful, Old-World traditions including poetry and storytelling, an exchange of swords, Handfasting, braided hairstyles, a helmet or two (maybe horned), a fur coat, and shields, before, during or after the ceremony.

### Always on a Friday

Most Norse/Viking weddings occur on a Friday which is named after the Norse Goddess Freya, the goddess of blessings, love, lust, luck, beauty, fertility, sex, childbirth, war, gold, and *seiðr* (*magic for seeing and influencing the future*) who achieved her ends with the gentler persuasions of gifts, beauty, and sex but she also fought fiercely in battle. She was also known as Freja, Freyia, Freyja, Fröja, Fröya, Frøjya, Frua and possibly Frigg and was the wife of Odin, the king of the Norse gods, also known as the All Father. Freya was also known as *Gefn*, *Hörn*, *Mardöll*, *Sýr*, *Vanadís*, and *Valfreyja* and appears in many stories about fertility, love, war, and hunting and was known for her skills in magic, including being able to shape-shift into any animal or object. Freya was strongly connected to nature and presided over all aspects of love and happiness and so one of her most famous roles is presiding over marriage



ceremonies, bringing together two people destined to be happy, helping them have a healthy relationship. She not only blesses babies with good health, but can make crops proliferate, and heal injuries sustained during combat or in accidents.

The marriage of Odin and Frigg, the goddess of love, marriage and fertility is considered to have been the very first marriage and to have been holy.

The bride wore a flower crown while her bridesmaids carried her train behind her, and everyone gathered around them as she walked down an aisle formed by guests holding candles in their hands while Odin donned a fur cape draped over his shoulders.

Hence it is considered good luck for the couple to marry on Freya's day (Friday) and so weddings were almost always on a Friday.

A specific time of year was chosen, between the end of the harvest in late summer or autumn and before the arrival of heavy snowfall so as to avoid difficult travel and food scarcity and ensuring that both families had the best to offer for the wedding celebration.

Given that snow is limited to specific areas of Australia, the time period is not usually high in demand.

Thor-the God of thunder

Thor, the more aggressive Norse God of Thunder and controller of the weather is also known to represent fertility and so played a large part in the Viking wedding process, and a considerable part of the family's future.

While Thor's strength and power would be desired throughout the marriage, weddings also called upon Thor to bless the marriage with great love, fertility, and battle readiness, preparing the couple for years to come, as well as blessing their future children with stability and long lives.

A blood sacrifice mentioned later in this article was to ask Thor for his blessing of the marriage.

When the Groom's party carry an ancestral sword to be presented to the bride, the men also carry a symbol of **Thor**

A representation of Thor's hammer, Mjolnir, is often placed in the bride's lap as she asks for Thor's blessing for healthy and strong children.

Though not common, a Viking fan might even choose to have a wedding on a Thursday in honour of Thor,



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## Proposal

Marriage was seen as a practical arrangement rather than a romantic one, and it served many purposes beyond just providing companionship and love. It was essentially a business contract between two families. It was a way to establish alliances, secure property, and ensure the continuation of the family line.

Romantic love as the basis for marriage did not exist in Viking society and so courtship was not strictly necessary, as marriage was more about practical considerations than emotional ones.

Viking proposals were a formal affair, following a strict set of customs and traditions with negotiations and gifts playing a crucial role in the process. While love may not have been the driving force behind Viking marriages that were more a business transaction, the customs and traditions surrounding Viking proposals and weddings were rich and meaningful.

The Proposal of marriage generally came from the groom or his father with contact being made with the family of the chosen girl for negotiations to begin. From around 12th century, consent of the bride became mandatory for a marriage to take place.

Once negotiations were complete with a price was agreed upon, the groom-to-be presented his intended bride and family with the “mundr” which might be jewellery or livestock as a sign of the groom’s commitment to the marriage. The heads, the men, of both families would then meet and negotiate the wedding arrangements with the wedding taking place about a year later, perhaps taking into consideration, the bride’s opinion.

The bride-to-be customarily brought a dowry to the wedding, which was known as “heimanfylgja.” Which could be anything from land to household goods as a sign of the bride’s worth.

## Polygamy

While polygamy did exist among the wealthiest Vikings, it was rare and though allowed, it was not necessarily encouraged or seen as the norm as the ideal form of marriage in Viking society was monogamy.

Divorce was rare but also possible.

## Bathhouse Maidenhood Ritual

The day before the ceremony, the couple were separated and the bride would be accompanied by married female friends and family to cleanse herself in a bathhouse where she would be stripped of old clothing and any symbols of her unwed and maidenhood status.



Scandinavian women wore a kransen, a head wreath or gilt circlet on their hair that symbolised their virginity. The kransen was removed during the bathhouse ritual to represent the transition to womanhood and so removing the kransen, was a very significant part of the marriage preparation as it meant the bride was then prepared to

lose her virginity to her new husband.

The kransen was replaced with a crown.#

She was then bathed in steaming water, followed by freezing water to symbolically wash away her unwed and maidenhood status.

## Manhood Ritual

The day before marriage, the Viking groom would also undergo a ceremony to mark his transition from childhood to adulthood before the wedding itself.

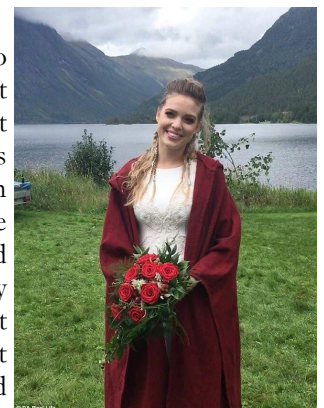
He would go with the married men of his family to break into a grave to retrieve an ancestral sword or axe. This action was said to make the groom enter into death as a boy and emerge into new life as a man, reborn and filled with marital promises and a family. The sword taken would be given to the bride during the marriage ceremony. However the weapon retrieved was not necessarily the blade the ancestor was buried with as that blade would have been bent or broken at the ancestor’s funeral and the weapon to be used at the wedding, might have been shallowly buried on top or, or close to the grave, specifically for the wedding preparation.

A blood sacrifice, usually a goat or cow, was also a common feature in order to thank the Gods for letting the couple find each other and to ask Thor or Friga, for their blessing of the marriage. The animal’s blood would be kept in the temple for use in the ceremony.

Like the bride, the groom would be bathed and dressed for the ceremony.

## Wedding Wear

Clothing wasn’t assumed to have been culturally relevant when it came to being wed but Viking bridal attire was colourful, ornate, often decorated with intricate patterns and embroidery, and full of symbolism with every aspect of the bride’s outfit carefully chosen to represent fertility, new beginnings, and wealth.



Traditionally, Norse brides wore a long flowing dress made of linen or wool, with ruffles, and maybe a fur trim; and of different vibrant colours that were bright and bold, such as red, blue, yellow, or green, in patterns. Red was prominent because of its association with love, passion, and fertility.

In consideration of the cooler climate, clothing was worn in multiple layers under a woollen, fur or fur-lined cloak that was also often decorated with intricate embroidery or patterns to symbolise the bride’s skill and craftsmanship.



The bride’s hair though was more important to the Vikings. Loose, flowing hair with intricate braids symbolised the

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bride's sexuality.

In preparation for the wedding, the bride also receives a traditional crown, passed down through her family's generations for each newlywed. Women would also gather flowers, herbs, straw, wood, crystals, beads or any other material available to create her bridal headdress or crown, to symbolize fertility and new beginnings. The headdress would often be accompanied by a veil, to ward off evil spirits.

Jewellery was also important including silver or gold, necklaces, bracelets, thought to be a symbol of wealth and status. Earrings are not a certainty as history is vague whether Vikings wore earrings.

The ceremony itself was however of greater importance than what was worn by the bride.

The groom's would wear a tunic and trousers made of wool or linen, leather boots, and a fur cloak but his sword was the most important attire. His hair is worn in a traditional Viking style, often braided (not dreads) and tied back with a leather cord.

Though made popular by operas and movies, historically, Vikings didn't actually wear horned helmets but they do now symbolise the Viking culture.

### Valknut

Overall, the Valknut is a powerful symbol that represents the strength and unity of a couple's love and commitment. Its deep roots in Viking mythology make it a meaningful and timeless symbol for weddings today.



The Valknut, consists of three interlocked triangles, representing the *past, present, and future*.

Extrapolating, this includes the afterlife and the connection between the living and the dead, the three Norns who were goddesses of fate and destiny, and of course, strength & unity.

The Valknut may appear on wedding invitations, the wedding cake, venue decoration, and be incorporated into the design on the wedding rings or other jewellery worn by the bride and groom.

### Celebrant

Viking weddings were officiated by a Pagan priest or priestess, also known as a Gothi, Goði, or Gyðja responsible for leading the couple through various rituals and ceremonies, invoking the blessings of the gods and goddesses and ensuring that the ceremony was conducted in accordance with the couple's wishes. In



Scandinavia today, many modern Viking weddings are still officiated by a Gothi, Goði, or Gyðja well-versed in Norse mythology, Viking history, and Pagan rituals as part of the Asatru community however not all Viking weddings are Pagan as some couples may choose to simply incorporate Viking elements into a more western style wedding ceremony designed and scripted by a Civil Celebrant adhering to the couple's wishes.

### Blot Ritual

The Viking Ceremony begins with the Blot (Blood) ritual. It might generate the wrath of animal rights supporters but a blood sacrifice, a goat or a cow, was a common practice in Viking weddings and was seen as a way to honour the gods, thanking the Gods for letting the couple find each other and to ask Thor for his blessing of the marriage.

If the animal sacrifice was performed beforehand by the Gothi (priest) the animal's blood would be kept in the temple for use in the ceremony and the blood was then drizzled over effigies of the Gods and then over the foreheads of the couple as a symbol of the union of the Gods and People.

Mead is now used in the place of blood.

### Exchanging of Swords & Rings

The ring exchange might include both finger rings and arm rings.

The men carry the sword along with a symbol of Thor.

The bride would also gift the groom with an ancestral sword from her living family, representing the interlocking of



living and deceased families, and to symbolise the transfer of her father's protection of the bride, to the husband.

The wedding rings, often adorned with intricate designs and symbols, might be exchanged alongside the swords or be placed on the blade or hilt of the sword, adding further meaning to the exchange or given

separately and held by the two individually.

The rings being attached to the sword may create an heirloom piece to be handed down from generation to generation.

### Handfasting & Vows

In a handfasting ritual, the couple's hands are bound together with a ribbon or cord to symbolize their union.

More about handfasting at this link [Tie the knot – Handfasting.](#)

Vows may be said during the handfasting which is a commitment to love and honour each other for life, or during the ring exchange, or separately, but in Viking traditions, Vows were simple, rather than on flowery or grand,



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focusing on sincerity, and so are very similar to traditional western vows:

- “I, [name], take you, [name], to be my lawfully wedded spouse, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.”
- “With this ring, I thee wed. I give you my heart and soul, and promise to love and cherish you always.”
- “I promise to be your faithful partner, to stand by your side through thick and thin, and to love and support you for all eternity.”

However, if going to all the effort of a Viking Wedding, why not be inspired by the Viking spirit with vows such as:

- “I ask Freyr to bless us and swear by Odin and Thor to love and cherish you, to be your protector and provider, and to share in all of life’s great adventures.”

### The Running Bride

Once the ceremony has ended, the Celebrant announces that it is time for the *brudblaup*, (brullaup) or ‘Bride Running’. The groom's family race the bride's to the reception hall and the family that loses has to serve drinks to the family who arrived first for the rest of the wedding night.

### Toasting the Gods

Before the festivities, the Bride pours a measure of Mead and hands it to the Groom who then and consecrates the drink to Thor and then toasts to Odin.

The Groom then hands the cup back to his bride who toasts to Freya.

This included the Gods in the festivities after they had already been included in the ceremony before. Without this toasting, the wedding is not considered valid.

### A Feast Fit For The Gods

The vast gatherings were of great significance for both families, and helped start a significant relationship between the groom and bride. Once the celebration ended, the families would be great allies, supporting and representing the couple throughout their lives before repeating the process with other marriages.

The Viking wedding was a week-long celebration filled with feasting, music, and dancing with entertainment and unique sporting events. It was an opportunity for the bride and groom’s families to come together and form alliances.

Games played and other entertainment might include dancing, mock insults, wrestling, throwing competitions, mock sword play, and archery.

There may be an artist to do rune tattoos at the reception.

A magnificent feast of food and drinks of every kind was served including fish, roasted meat, roast pig, and hearty seasonal vegetables.

There is an abundance of alcohol, especially mead which is made from fermented honey, and the newlyweds would drink their mead from a "loving cup", or from the same Viking drinking horn, while guests would use Viking

drinking horns to hold different ales and mead.

- Modern Norwegian wedding receptions

Tapping a drinking glass with cutlery, signals to the couple to stand and kiss but if feet are stamped the couple are to kiss under the table.

When the bride visits the bathroom, all female guests kiss the groom on the cheek and the reverse happens when the groom leaves.

### The Morning Gift

The Festivities and ceremonies have not yet been completed until the morning after the wedding when the bride and groom are once again separated.

The Bride is bathed and dressed with her hair braided in a manner reserved for a married woman.

She is then escorted to the hall where the Groom arrives and before witnesses, pays her a Morning Gift to complete the wedding legalities.

Another 6 days of celebration follow and the couple head off for their honeymoon.

### Honeymoon

The word "honeymoon" is derived from Scandinavian culture and comes from the practice of drinking mead, or fermented honey, during the first month of the marriage which is measured by one moon cycle, and is meant to improve the likelihood of fertility.

The Viking honeymoon was a time for the bride and groom to be alone and consummate their marriage, usually in a secluded location, such as a cabin in the woods or a tent on the beach.

### Venue

An outdoor or rustic venue, such as a forest, beach, or farm shed.

### Decor

Long wooden tables, candles, animal skins, and flowers as well as Viking symbols, such as the hammer of Thor or the Valknut, to add a touch of Norse mythology.

There could be a bonfire or torches to create a warm and inviting atmosphere.

### Kittens

Freyja was not only the goddess of love and marriage, but also the goddess of luck, who was known for her love of cats and so it was believed that cats could bring good luck to their owners. Vikings even purportedly took their cats with them on their voyages, in the belief that the cats could help steer the ship and protect them from evil spirits.

Although there is no concrete evidence to support the legend, it was claimed that to honour Freyja, Vikings gifted their new brides with kittens.

references

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- [Viking Wedding Traditions \(to Plan a Modern Norse Ceremony\) \(seekscandinavia.com\)](http://seekscandinavia.com)
- [wedding customs and traditions by Lauren Whalley](#)
- <https://www.theknot.com/content/norse-wedding-traditions>
- [Handfasting](#)
- [Freyja - Norse Goddess of Fertility by Ulf Eisenbart](#)
- [https://thewarriorlodge.com/blogs/news/the-traditional-viking-wedding?gad\\_source=5&gclid=EALaIQobChMh7bHs9\\_IhgMVNSaDax29myX\\_EAAYASAAEgIU1vD\\_BwE](https://thewarriorlodge.com/blogs/news/the-traditional-viking-wedding?gad_source=5&gclid=EALaIQobChMh7bHs9_IhgMVNSaDax29myX_EAAYASAAEgIU1vD_BwE)







The South Coast of NSW is a paradise.

Is it any wonder that people want to marry and live here!

There are always wonderful things happening on the south coast and some couple like to link their events to festivals or perhaps avoid particular dates to ensure transport and accommodation is a breeze and as Celebrants, we can make suggestions to couples and clients. Here are some dates & events to consider but you can find a list at <https://www.shoalhaven.com/event-guide/>. July is the seventh month of the year in the Julian and Gregorian calendars. Its length is 31 days. It was named by the Roman Senate in honour of Roman general Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., being the month of his birth. Before then it was called Quintilis, being the fifth month of the calendar that started with March. <sup>1</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July>

**Saturday 04 May 2024 to Saturday 07 September 2024 (MONTHLY event)** Jervis Bay Maritime Museum Winter Markets, Dent Street, Huskisson <https://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/south-coast/jervis-bay-and-shoalhaven/huskisson/events/jervis-bay-maritime-museum-winter-markets>

7-14 July 2024 National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC), week. Origins can be traced to 1920s when groups sought to increase awareness of the status and treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.



10 July 2024 AMC **SYDNEY WEST/BLUE MTN REGIONAL MEETING** at Emu Sports Club  
13 July 2024 **The Friendly Inn Hotel's Bastille Day Pétanque Festival** - 159 Moss Vale Road, Kangaroo Valley 0412 424 069



**COQ Fest – A Bastille Day Party In The Bush**— - 407D Bendeela Road Kangaroo Valley 0406 995 332 [bookings@kangaroovalleycountrywedding.com](mailto:bookings@kangaroovalleycountrywedding.com)



17 July 1917 107th anniversary of when King George V changed the name of the British royal family to Windsor from the German Saxe-Coburg Gotha on 17th July 1917

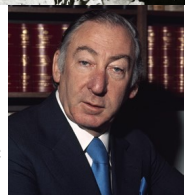


**19th July 1973 51st Anniversary of the appointment of the first Civil Celebrant by Lionel Murphy on Thursday 19th July 1973**

20th July 2024 55th Anniversary of the first man on the Moon

24th July 2024 51 years since Miss Lyn Knorr was appointed as a Civil Marriage Celebrant

26 July 2024 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm **DIY CHOCOLATE BOX WORKSHOP** 6 Old Creamery Lane Berry 02 4464 1112 [enquiries@treatfactory.com.au](mailto:enquiries@treatfactory.com.au)



27 July 1975 Robert Smith celebrates his 49th anniversary as a celebrant, having been registered on 27 July 1975, the to make him the 273rd Celebrant appointed, as Celebrant number 772



28 July 110th anniversary of the beginning of WWI on 28 July 1914

**31st July 2024 AMC Education— AI & ChatGTP Introduction**

Join Rourke Wolstenholme for an insightful session on "AI Basics for Celebrants." This introductory course will cover the fundamentals of AI, with a special focus on ChatGPT and its potential to streamline your processes as a celebrant. Rourke tells us that she is an expert in AI-driven business solutions, specialising in helping entrepreneurs leverage ChatGPT and other AI tools. Experienced in the wedding industry, successfully managed her business while raising a baby. She offers courses and services designed to help you automate tasks, enhance productivity, and balance your professional and personal life with ease. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from a seasoned professional and discover how AI can transform your celebrant business!



There will be an article on AI next month's newsletter.



## COORDINATOR COMMENTS



### The only thing constant about change, is constant change.

There has been some level of panic and mixed feeling among celebrants about the most recent changes to the Marriage Act (see page 12 & pages 13-15 from MLCS) but in reality the changes are somewhat minor.

Being able to conduct NOIM lodgement via audio visual links brings back a practical convenience and huge time & travel cost saving. I'll come back to this but will discuss the necessity of confirming consent which simply clarifies what has already been happening or should have been happening in that without valid, informed and current consent, a marriage ceremony should not take place. It would be illegal.

### Yes, there is a far greater responsibility upon the Celebrant to establish and confirm current consent

but for me it changes very little in my procedures because from the very first meeting, my couples are aware that consent is mandatory and can be withdrawn at any time up until the exchange of vows and so even after the ceremony has started, a party can say "No" and/or simply walk away. I inform my couples that:

- ◆ they can read and edit their scripts well before the ceremony (includes consent questions)
- ◆ to contact me at any time with any concerns

I have also always told couples that before the ceremony I will perform a 'welfare check' when I will come to see them each to ask certain questions including:

1. Are you sober? *(Cognitive)*
2. Are you breathing? *(Cognitive)*
3. Are you over 18? *(eligibility)*
4. Are you married to anyone else? *(eligibility)*
5. Do you wish to marry today? *(Consent)*
6. Are your details correct on this (DONLIM) before you sign? *(identity, eligibility & consent)*

**I will now have to document that meeting in a diary or might even create a special document for them to sign to confirm consent. It would be great if the DONLIM was updated to include that.**

I explain from the first meeting and reiterate it along the path, that if I am not satisfied with the answers, or if they don't wish to sign the DONLIM, the marriage ceremony will not proceed.

Being forewarned, couples look forward to that special private meeting and usually joke about it. I once had a bride panic a little because I hadn't yet been to see her and then she expressed great relief when I did as it gave her comfort and we shared a warm smile. Her bridesmaids tried to listen in but she sent them away for her private, important and reassuring meeting. She wasn't hesitant about marrying but wanted to ensure legalities were met. That wedding joyfully went ahead.

During each ceremony, before we get to the exchange of minimum legal vows, I ask about intent twice:

1. "Have you come here today to marry?"
2. "Do you choose this person to be your partner in marriage?"

The registration of marriages will now include the extra questions regarding confirmation that the separate meetings had taken place.

In the full scheme of things, this is not a huge change, just a clarification or responsibility. I found the MLCS advice, (see pages 13-15 from MLCS) while very valid and informative, is likely to cause distress among some Celebrants who might have not realised that the change is not actually dramatic and does not place the Celebrant in danger.. Ask yourself, how would this change, impact on any ceremony you have already conducted and would it have changed anything.

Returning to the subject of remote witnessing of NOIMs; that is FANTASTIC!

It truly simplifies NOIM lodgement, especially for the many celebrants who are in country and remote locations. For all of us on the South Coast of NSW who perform weddings for people who may be many hours' drive and kilometres away, it significantly reduces costs but even for the city dwellers where a round trip in traffic of just a few kilometres may take a couple of hours, it is a huge saving of time and energy. I recall when in Melbourne, I had a meeting just 7 kilometres away from St Kilda but it took me over an hour to drive there. I could have walked faster.

The amendments regarding the acceptable evidence of date and place of birth under paragraph 42(1)(b) of the Marriage Act clarifies what is already the practice i.e. using passports instead of birth certificates, just as the transferring of NOIMs removes the grey area of legality so that a valid reason for transfer is now as simple as being at the request of the marrying couple.

Other measures changed are really just housekeeping for the MLCS removing areas of uncertainty in processes.

Overall the changes should be quickly adopted by all without difficulty and if all of these changes make life easier for us all, that's can only be positive. **You got this!**