



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.



AUSTRALIAN
MARRIAGE
CELEBRANTS

All content is created for information only and is not legal advice, and not necessarily the views of the AMC.

It is compiled & edited by Lou Szymkow and whilst all care is taken, the editor cannot guarantee the accuracy of information. The editor, guest contributors & guest speakers all volunteer their time for Celebrants.

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COVER PHOTO
2023 AMC Conference

Will You Step UP?

The time is almost here. An election will soon take place to elect a new committee at the Annual General Meeting of the AMC and so it is time to consider just who should be representing and leading our community of Celebrants, and whether will YOU be among them.

The AMC is your community and your association. Do you want to make it even better? Consider what direction you want our AMC to go, what great things you want the AMC to achieve and how that will be achieved. Do you want change, or enhancement, or something else of your association. These things do not happen on their own, they need leadership, effort, dedication, ambition, skills and above all, a smile. Why a smile? Well when you enjoy what you are doing, you accomplish so much more and the little bumps on the road fade to insignificance.

People join an association because they want so show they are professionals, they want insurances, support and an online presence. AMC does that and more.

Mostly, members don't notice the work that is being done except when it doesn't work. The webpage is a great example. Some noticed that the webpage wasn't functioning as it should and so great energy was put into updating and fixing the webpage however the first attempt failed. The developers claimed they were creating a new webpage from scratch and incorporating wonderful functions & functionality, however, sadly what was promised and what was being delivered



did not coincide and so that is now at last being corrected. It took a new committee to get that progressed. An entirely new webpage is being built by a new developer and the features that were originally asked for and promised, are slowly coming to fruition. The new webpage already looks so much better but it needed the right people with the right skills to make the right decisions to get there. Work is continuing and full functionality should be available soon.

The same goes with the Constitution. Effective committees need to know precisely what they are expected, and authorised, to do and the constitutions clarifies and precisely delineate roles. The constitution of a committee is the foundation for its activities.

The old constitution was greatly flawed and a former committee recognised that but procrastinated over action. A new draft was prepared but not enacted. The new committee in place in October 2024, set about correcting that and within days, a functional draft was created. That new constitution will soon

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be presented to members for input and ratification, to strengthen the AMC. You can be a part of that and much more.

Next on the agenda are Policies and Procedures which will also be updated to make it easier and more practical to get the AMC work done and so everything from administration to voting, to planning and advertising, will be easier, less complicated and have a greater opportunity of successful completion to promote you as a leading Celebrant.

That means that new elected committee will find everything easy to accomplish. Growth will be a certainty.

Will you be a part of that?

Are you ready to nominate?

A survey of former committee members including presidents revealed that those, such as our President Annemarie McDonell, who love being a part of the committee despite the occasional frustrations are achievers, pushing for improvement. She has seen people come and go but has stuck to it, working in the background with dedication to make a better future for Celebrants. The survey also indicated that those who disliked being on the committee were not there for the right reasons. They were happy to have the prestige of being on the AMC committee but didn't put in the effort needed to collaborate and find consensus to get things done and/or didn't feel they were being lead toward progressively. They were not change makers with a joint vision for the future.

You can be the change maker.!

Consider what skills you can provide, what energy you can provide, what ideas you have and how can you collaboratively get them progressed or how to support others with great ideas. You already read that the new constitution will make it easier, and so what is holding you back? How will you help your fellow Celebrants, your profession and of course yourself? Can you work in a team of like-minded AMC members who have a joint visions for the benefit of us all?

You have been the beneficiary of all that the AMC provides and so perhaps it is your time to pay that forward.

How can you contribute?

Can you work as part of a team?

Will you now contribute?

How can you help to strengthen the AMC?

How will you make the AMC even better?

How will you help the AMC grow?

Look for the nomination forms and start getting ready. **It is your time.**



Running a committee meeting

10 key steps to running a committee meeting

Ready to dive into the specifics of hosting an exceptional committee meeting that will leave attendees in awe of your skills?

Keep reading to learn 10 expert tips.

- 1) [Set a clear purpose](#)
- 2) [Keep to the agenda](#)
- 3) [Set a time for updates](#)
- 4) [Assign meeting roles](#)
- 5) [Have a voting process](#)
- 6) [Follow rules of order](#)
- 7) [Give fair notice](#)
- 8) [Take detailed notes](#)
- 9) [Close the meeting with next steps](#)
- 10) [Share the notes afterward](#)

<https://fellow.app/blog/meetings/how-to-run-an-efficient-committee-meeting-ten-key-steps/>

WHAT MAKES A GOOD COMMITTEE?

This is a list of commonly held traits that enable a successful committee?

- Purpose
- Constitution
- Strategic Plan
- Clear Role Descriptions
- Codes of conduct
- Induction process
- Succession planning
- Budget
- Governance
- Duty of Care
- Determination to succeed
- Diversity
- Creativity
- Skills
- Problem solving
- Decision making processes



Another Association, Australian Sailing, has an online resource that, although geared to its own association, does go into the aspects that we might find helpful.

It is found at this site:

["What makes a successful committee"](#)

It not only covers the value and importance of a good constitution, but what is need to make a committee work well.



The AMC Find Your Celebrant page is a public page designed for members of the Australian Marriage Celebrants Association to present all things wedding-related, aiming to aid couples planning to tie the knot with ideas and inspiration. Post images to get noticed.

Get on there to boost your online presence.

⇒ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1080143143287465>

⇒ <https://www.facebook.com/australianmarriagecelebrants>




The new AMC webpage looks fantastic!

Progress has been promising yet frequently marred with some technical challenges that Ash Reynolds, our Web expert is diligently working at resolving. Ash has been making so much progress that he expects that the member's section will finally be completed within this month. He explains that the process of migrating the member content including photos, has proven unusually difficult as the old data base was very flawed and so effectively hundreds of profiles had to be rewritten to ensure that when members are soon again able to log-in, they will do so with confidence and security and will be able see and find much needed resources, including the calendar of events, the constitution, insurance details, certificates, sample ceremonies and so much more while couples will be able to once again easily find a celebrant of choice. The content on the public face of the webpage is of course also being updated. Ash was able to copy that data across quickly and a small team of dedicated members will review the content to update and improve it. So in short, we members and couples alike will all soon be able to see and benefit from the incredible progress. Well done Ash.


Education Session

November 27th 7pm
Enza Pacetta
from Gallagher Insurance

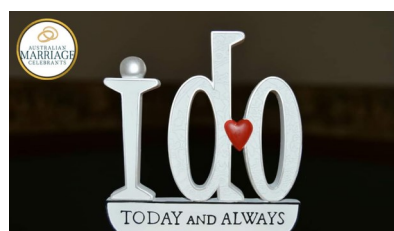
Learn more about the insurances provided with your AMC membership from Enza and her team from Gallagher Insurance. This will be a short presentation on the importance of Insurance coverage and will provide loads of Q&A time so get your questions ready.



A strong, practical, well worded constitution is the foundation of any organisation. Work on a new, much improved AMC Constitution has progressed considerably and is almost ready for presentation to members. Contradictions and poor wording in the old and outdated constitution are being removed and wording made clearer so that the AMC Constitution will be far more useful and more easily followed.



Updates Meetings
CoCA 13/11/2024
MLCS 14/11/2024



The I Do page is back by popular demand



Letters to the Editor

Hearing from readers is wonderful, because it lets me know that my efforts to keep you informed are valued and appreciated. It's as good as seeing a positive review from a client and always a pleasure reading. Your articles, book or movie reviews, and Celebrant Snapshots are particularly appreciated. Please keep it up.

I resigned from being a registered celebrant in 2018 after officiating at 1897 wedding ceremonies over a period of 20 years in the Newcastle-Hunter Valley area of NSW.

I find contents of your Newsletter most interesting particularly in relation to changes of the Marriage Act and regulations and requirements of current registered celebrants. I am often asked if I am still a celebrant and asked of the requirements for couples intending to be married. I have found some of the information contained in the publication most helpful in advising couples of their obligations and needs when preparing a wedding. I was honoured to have received Life Membership of the *Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of NSW & ACT Inc.*

Unless there is an obligation for me to be a registered celebrant in order to receive the Newsletter I would be pleased to remain on your list of subscribers. Congratulations on the contribution you have made in producing a very information Newsletter and I am sure it is most helpful and appreciated by registered celebrants.

Kind Regards,

Ron S McSporran

I love your newsletter and open it straight away. I am on the AMC Committee but still discover more about AMC activity from the articles. So informative.
Marcus Kroek

Great work again, Lou. Congratulations. I particularly liked your newsletter commentary (October issue). We need to look after ourselves before we can properly look after others. I have seen a number of funeral Celebrants burnout they do too many ceremonies because the money is so low and because I do it well, they knocked themselves about. It would all be solved if funeral Celebrants charged an hourly rate. Like everyone else does.

Thanks again,

Dally. Messenger III

Thanks for the Newsletter Lou, fabulous content as always. Alma Anderson

Hi Lou

Once again congrats on a wonderful informative and newsy bulletin. Incredible the amount of information. Kind regards and again congrats.

Barry Young

Lou, Thanks yet again for another informative newsletter. Your attention to detail and having links that are able to be accessed effortlessly is very much appreciated.

Marion Way

Thanks Lou, Very informative got to learn more about what is happening in AMC,

Paul Guy

It's Your **feedback** Turn!

Have you enjoyed reading this newsletter? Have you agreed or disagreed with an article, or perhaps you have another idea?

We are a community of Celebrants who learn from each other. It is your turn to have your say and be published in this newsletter. The more we learn, the more we discover how much there is to learn.

What will you write about in this newsletter?

You are unique. Your ideas, experiences, interpretations and creations are your own. Tell us all, about them.

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. Together we are not just better and stronger but raise the standard for all

LIFE GETS BETTER
Together

Sovereign Citizens



The **sovereign citizen movement** is a loose group of anti-government activists, litigants, tax protesters, financial scammers, and conspiracy theorists mainly based in the United States from the 1960s but we have some in Australia dating as far back as the Eureka Stockade. Sovereign citizens claim to not be subject to any government statutes unless they consent to them and so are regarded by authorities as *'anti-government extremists'*.

A person chosen by a couple to be witness at a NSW wedding, refused to sign the documents because the documents were created under Commonwealth law. The person identified as a **sovereign citizen** and so another witness had to be chosen because people who refer to themselves as Sovereign Citizens reject the laws of the Commonwealth. They wrongly believe they are not subject to Australian federal, state, or local law because, they claim the laws are invalid and so they would, themselves admit that witnessing a legal procedure and/or legal document would be against their firmly held beliefs.

They don't recognise the law and regard it an invalid..

Sovereign citizens will often question the government's authority in regard to creating laws, imposing taxes, licensing, and the entire legal systems. Subscribing to conspiracy theories, they are usually anti-vaccination and during Covid, used the Sovereign Citizen stance to object to travel restrictions, compulsory masking and to the distribution of vaccines.

The question arises as to whether an Authorised Celebrant can even perform a solemnisation of marriage ceremony for a Sovereign Citizen or in a sovereign state such as Hutt River and the simple response has to be no because if the person **does not recognise the Marriage Act** or any other Australian law, the consent to marry under Australian law is not a real consent. A consideration might be given to phrasing an appropriate question during the private consent meetings, e.g. do you recognise and understand that you will be married under Australian

Law?" or something similar.

For a Sovereign Citizen to agree to take part in a marriage ceremony it is in effect fraudulent and of course as a Celebrant if we have any doubt as to the validity of consent or of the ceremony, we cannot perform the ceremony. It would be an offence under the Act.

One of the most famous sovereign citizens in Australia involved the **Principality of Hutt River**.



According to [Wikipedia](#) (and I am keeping some of the links here for credit and in case you wish to read more) was often referred to by its former name, the **Hutt River Province**, which was a micronation in Australia, proclaimed on 21 April 1970 when farmer [Leonard Casley](#) (pictured)



declared his farm to be a sovereign state, the "*Hutt River Province*". He claimed to have seceded from Australia, which occurred during his dispute with the authorities concerning wheat production quotas. A few years later, Casley began styling himself as "Prince Leonard" and granting family members royal titles, although he did not include the word "principality" in the

official name until 2006.

He created its own flag and tax system governed by laws which were enacted by his self-declared government consisting five ministers.



Leonard sought to evade paying Australian taxes, and was found to owe \$3 million in income tax in 2017.^[17] As part of this tax case, he sought to justify his position on the basis of the pseudo-



legal [Strawman theory](#).^[18] Although Casley created *s t a m p s*, micronation currency (Hutt River Dollar), visas, and passports for his sovereign state. All authorised Principality coins were minted by Canada's Lombardo Mint and the New Queensland Mint. Casley

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Sovereign Citizens



claimed that his passports were accepted by foreign nations but research suggests that they were regarded as invalid and unrecognised. The

federal Government of Australia never officially recognised Hutt River as an official and independent nation, and later, it became a well-known tourist attraction in Australia. In 2017, Casley's claim to rulership was taken over by his son Graeme,^{[21][24]} who dropped the claim to sovereignty on 3 August 2020. As an adherent of hermeticism, Casley privately published a number of research papers and books on the subject. Wikipedia suggests that Casley is the subject of a permanent exhibit at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.^{[27][28]} however that is not evident on the Museum webpage.. Prince Leonard was perhaps the inspiration of others in Australia declaring themselves to be sovereign citizens. Whilst many Celebrants in urban areas have never encountered self proclaimed Sovereign Citizens, they may have seen YouTube videos of Sovereign Citizen refusing to show identification to Police when stopped on state or federal roads and then insisting that they are not driving but simply 'travelling'. When summonsed to court, the Sovereign citizen will usually self-represent.

According to the NSW Justices Association magistrates, in the last six months in NSW have reported that the number of judicial complaints has increased between 20 to 30 per cent, with many of those filed by sovereign citizens contesting low-grade legal matters such as speeding or parking fines, driving without a licence, driving unregistered vehicles, trespassing, illicit drug use or intimidating & threatening officials, and in preparing their defence, the Sovereign Citizen may approach a Justice of the Peace or a Marriage Celebrant to witness an affidavit with as many as 300 annexures. Those low level offences

are of course commonly subject to state law and so unless the hearing is in the ACT, the Affidavit would not normally be accepted by the court if witnessed by a Marriage Celebrant.

One celebrant reported having dealt with 5 sovereign citizen couples in just over 18 months, some of whom had been quite aggressive in their demands. The town has a single street light and is at least 70km from the next populated area and proportionally has a high drug use. One sovereign citizen couple contacted that Celebrant asserting that their farm was their 'nation' and they even created their own ID's which of course could not accept and so the Celebrant had to decline the ceremony because the couple refused to provide valid identity documents. The Celebrant also received a note similar to the following though a few details have been changed for privacy:

My birth rite and personal identification.

I am born of this Earth

I do not belong to any corporation including the corrupt Australian government.

I am a citizen of the Green Bush Nation.

My birth rite is Earth

My birth date is the date of my gaining awareness on 15th February 1968

My birth name is Flowing Stream.

I choose to renounce my Australian Government corporation name.

I should not need corporation documents to marry

I choose how I live and how I marry.

The couple even asked the Celebrant to 'fudge' the records which of course was also refused. The Celebrant had to explain to the couple that if as Sovereign Citizens they wished to marry under a law they recognise, it would have to be under their own nation's law but that a Celebrant Authorised under the Marriage Act is only authorised to solemnise marriages under Australian law within Australian borders. A commitment ceremony was not offered as the couple insisted they wished to 'marry'. In 2015, the Australian New South Wales Police Force also identified sovereign citizens as a potential terrorist threat. In the USA where the sovereign citizen movement was originally associated with white supremacy and antisemitism, law enforcement ranked the risk of terrorism from the sovereign citizen movement higher than the risk from any other group, including militias, Islamic extremists, racist skinheads, neo-Nazis, and radical environmentalists. The 1995 Oklahoma City bombings and in Australia, the 2022 Wieambilla Qld shootings were perpetrated by self declared sovereign citizens.

So in short, only legitimate documents from recognised nations can be accepted as evidence of the date & place of birth, and of identity, and if the party does not recognise Australian law, they cannot be married under the Marriage Act of Australia.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_citizen_movement
- [Principality of Hutt River - Wikipedia](#)
- [Prince Leonard Bust \(14389745770\) - Category:Leonard George Casley - Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Category:Leonard George Casley - Wikimedia Commons](#)



Wedding Customs

These are samples of what might be said at the ring exchange:

1. I give you this ring as a symbol of my love. I can give nothing greater”
2. “I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness. As I place it on your finger, I commit my heart and soul to you. I ask you to wear this ring as a reminder of the vows we have spoken today, our wedding day.”
3. “This ring is a token of my love. I marry you with this ring, with all that I have and all that I am.”(Response:) “I will forever wear this ring as a sign of my commitment and the desire of my heart.”
4. “I give you this ring to wear with love and joy. As a ring has no end, neither shall my love for you. I choose you to be my (*wife/ husband/ spouse*) this day and forevermore.”
5. “This ring I give to you as a token of my love and devotion to you. I pledge to you all that I am and all that I will ever be as your (*husband/ wife/ spouse*). With this ring, I gladly marry you and join my life to yours.”
6. “I give this ring as my gift to you. Wear it and think of me and know that I love you.”
7. “I give you this ring in God’s name, as a symbol of all that we have promised and all that we shall share.”
8. “I give you this ring as a visible and constant symbol of my promise to be with you as long as I live.”
9. “I give you this ring as a symbol of my love for you.
10. Let it be a reminder that I am always by your side and that I will always be a faithful partner to you.”
11. “I give you this ring as a symbol of my love, my faith in our strength together, and my covenant to learn and grow with you.”
12. “Let this ring be a symbol of my promises to you and a reminder of my devotion to you. I am honoured to call you my (*wife/ husband/ spouse*).”
13. “With this ring, I thee wed, and with it, I bestow upon thee all the treasures of my mind, heart, and hands.”
14. “(Name), I give you this ring as a symbol of my love. As it encircles your finger, may it remind you always that you are surrounded by my enduring love.” (Response:) “I will wear it gladly. Whenever I look at it, I will remember this joyous day and the vows we’ve made.”
15. “I have for you a golden ring. The most precious metal symbolizes that your love is the most precious element in my life. The ring has no beginning and no end, which symbolizes that the love between us will never cease. I place it on your finger as a visible sign of the vows which have made us husband and wife.”
16. “Because this ring is perfectly symmetrical, it signifies the perfection of true love.
17. As I place it on your finger, I give you all that I am and ever hope to be.”(Response:) “Because this ring has no end or beginning, it signifies the continuation of true love. As I place it on your finger, I give you all that I am and ever hope to be.”
18. I (Groom) (Bride) affirm my love and ask you to share my life, endeavouring through kindness, understanding and trust to achieve our future happiness together, and I ask all present to witness that I take you (Bride) (Groom) as my wife (husband).
19. I call upon everyone here, to witness that I (Bride) take you (Groom) to be my lawful wedded wife (husband). I intend to be faithful to you in thought, word and deed. I promise to respect you as an individual, loving and living with you through good fortune and adversity. I pledge these things to you while we both shall live.
20. I (Groom) (Bride) take you (Bride) (Groom) just as you are. I ask that you be no one but yourself. I love what I know of you; I trust what I have yet to learn. I respect you and have faith that our love will endure through all our lives.
21. I call upon these persons here present to witness that I (Groom) do take thee (Bride) to love and to cherish as my lawful wedded wife (husband). I intend to be faithful to you in thought, word and deed. I promise to respect you as an individual in your own right, I intend to grow and develop in partnership with you, to love and live with you through good fortune and adversity.



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Wedding Customs

EDUCATION & WELLBEING



22. I (Bride) (Groom) take you to be my wife (husband) from this day forward. I take you for your strengths and weaknesses. I will share with you the joys and the sorrows, the problems and the successes which we will encounter in our lives. I will love and cherish you and always be near when you need me.
23. I call upon our family and friends present to witness that I (Bride) (Groom) take (Bride) (Groom) to be my wife (husband).
24. (Bride) (Groom) I want to live with you just as you are. I choose you above all others to share my life openly with me. I want to love you for yourself in the hope that you will become all that can be. I promise to honour this pledge as long as life and faith endure.
25. I (Bride) (Groom) take thee (Bride) (Groom) to be my wife (husband) to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.
26. Today, I (Groom) (Bride), join my life to yours, not merely as your husband/wife, but as your friend, your lover, your partner for life. Let me be the shoulder you lean on, the rock on which you rest. With you, (Bride) (Groom), I will walk my path from this day forward.

From this day on, I (Bride) (Groom), choose you my beloved (Bride) (Groom), to be my wife/husband, to live with you and laugh with you; to stand by your side and sleep in your arms; to be joy to your heart and food to your soul; to bring out the best in you always; and, for you, to be the most that I can. To laugh with you in the good times; to struggle with you in the bad; to solace you when you are downhearted; to comfort you with my body; to mirror you with my soul; to share with you all my riches and honours; to enjoy with you as much as I can until we grow old, and still loving each other sweetly and gladly, until our lives shall come to the end.

Workplace mental health training

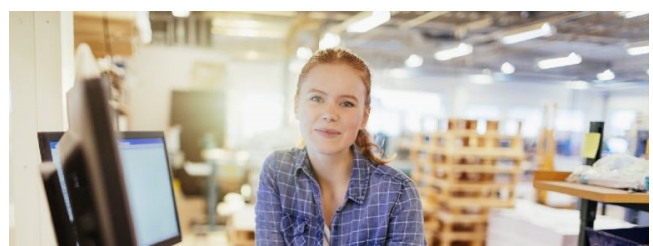
[Click to register at nsw.gov.au](https://nsw.gov.au)

Free Workplace mental health training
Get practical tools to talk about and support mental health in your workplace. Our free training programs are easy-to-do and suitable for everyone. Many of us will be affected by mental ill-health at some stage in our life.

Research shows one in six workers are experiencing it right now and taking steps to support mental health at work can make a difference.

Our free evidence-based training programs are:

- designed to give you the tools to promote positive mental health at work
- delivered by experts from Black Dog Institute
- designed for all roles in the workplace available as an interactive workshop or self-paced online learning. You can book multiple sessions and delivery options.
- [What is workplace mental health training](#)
- [Eligibility](#)
- [How to register](#)
- [Training programs](#)
- [Common questions about the training](#)
- [Related information](#)



Marketing

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Learn new ways to help run and grow your business with the 9-part series of **Free** small business webinars. The **Reboot** lunchtime learning webinars feature leaders in business who are experts in their field. Subjects include:

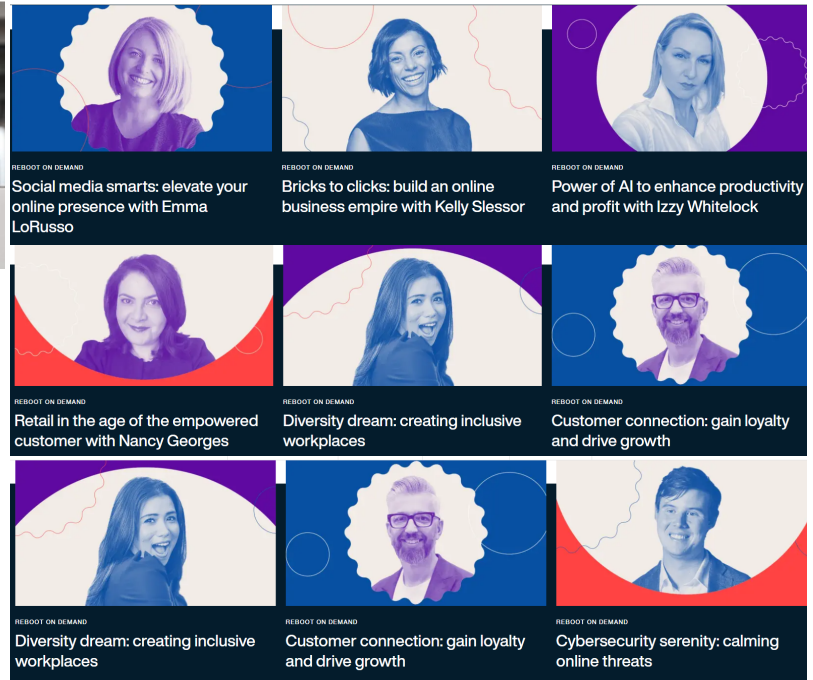
- mastering social media
- elevating eCommerce
- embracing AI innovation
- resilient business growth.

Brought to you free by the City of Sydney and proudly supported by Service NSW Business Connect, these training sessions will be led by a stellar line-up of experts.

The events ran from 30th April to 25th June 2024 but the recordings are available online. Sharpen your digital content skills and grow your customers and brand.

The 2024 series dives into mastering social media, elevating ecommerce, embracing AI innovation, and navigating challenges for resilient business growth.

The webinars provide inspiring stories and practical examples in 1-hour sessions. Each attendee will receive valuable learning resources customised for each session to guide their understanding of each business topic.



REBOOT ON DEMAND
Social media smarts: elevate your online presence with Emma LoRusso

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Bricks to clicks: build an online business empire with Kelly Slessor

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Power of AI to enhance productivity and profit with Izzy Whitelock

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Retail in the age of the empowered customer with Nancy Georges

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Diversity dream: creating inclusive workplaces

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Customer connection: gain loyalty and drive growth

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Diversity dream: creating inclusive workplaces

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Customer connection: gain loyalty and drive growth

REBOOT ON DEMAND
Cybersecurity serenity: calming online threats

[See all topics](#)

- 1) [Social media smarts: elevate your online presence \[webinar\] \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8y8MLH6F48&list=PLsDp4QpCqUQj9VeRK32AO4Z31fHRLbx11&index=3)
- 2) [WWSUP6862_YTBUMPER_BagABargain_ChickenBreast 1920x1080 6sec \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWSUP6862_YTBUMPER_BagABargain_ChickenBreast_1920x1080_6sec)
- 3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8y8MLH6F48&list=PLsDp4QpCqUQj9VeRK32AO4Z31fHRLbx11&index=3>
- 4) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMr76sHWpos&list=PLsDp4QpCqUQj9VeRK32AO4Z31fHRLbx11&index=4>
- 5) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv518x_uwbE&list=PLsDp4QpCqUQj9VeRK32AO4Z31fHRLbx11&index=6
- 6) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv518x_uwbE&list=PLsDp4QpCqUQj9VeRK32AO4Z31fHRLbx11&index=6
- 7) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Atg1DzroIIIs&list=PLsDp4QpCqUQj9VeRK32AO4Z31fHRLbx11&index=7>

How are you tracking against other businesses?

You can now compare how you're performing financially against others in your industry by using the business performance check tool within the [ATO app](#).

Finding out if your expenses are low, average or high compared to your industry's benchmarks can help in setting new goals and improving profitability.

[Compare your business](#)

You must expect great things of yourself before you can do them.

Michael Jordan



Your responsibilities for obligatory professional development (OPD)



As a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant, you must complete compulsory professional development activities every calendar year (January to December). These activities are available for free through your MarCel [online self-service portal](#). If you cannot access the portal MLCS can provide the OPD docs to you by email or hard copy.

You must complete the compulsory professional development activities by **31st December** each calendar year.

If you do not complete your obligatory professional development activities (OPD) the Marriage Law Celebrants Section (MLCS) may impose a disciplinary measure, unless you were granted a professional development exemption.

Disciplinary measures may include:

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

There are no elective activities but you may choose to undertake further professional development to broaden or enhance your skills and knowledge.

The AMC holds monthly education sessions that you will find very valuable but be aware that any additional training you undertake will not be counted towards your obligatory professional development activities and will not be carried over to the next calendar year.

Under section 57 of the Marriage Regulations 2017, Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants can apply to the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants for an exemption from their annual Ongoing Professional Development (OPD) requirements if exceptional circumstance exist and you must be able to satisfy the Registrar of those exceptional circumstances that prevent you from complying with your requirement to complete OPD in that calendar year. Applications for an exemption must be made in the calendar year for which the exemption is requested (i.e. before 31 December) and there is a nonrefundable fee.

MLCS may however exempt you from completing the professional development activities if you are registered towards the end of a calendar year and/or if you received a Certificate IV in Celebrancy in the 12 months before you

registered as a celebrant, exempting you from professional development for the calendar year of your first registration. You don't have to apply for these exemptions but MLCS will tell you in your registration email if you are exempt for these reasons and you can check your MarCel profile to see your existing obligations.

- ◇ [Guidelines for exemption from ongoing professional development requirements \[DOCX 81.68 KB\]](#)
- ◇ [Ongoing professional development \(OPD\)](#)
- ◇ [Professional development in 2024](#)
- ◇ [Your responsibilities for professional development](#)
- ◇ [Contact details](#)

Process for applying for an exemption

Applications for an exemption should be made via the online self-service portal. If you cannot access the portal, please contact MLCS at:

marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au

or call 1800 550 343 (Tuesday to Thursday, 10am to 12.30pm and 1pm to 4pm Canberra local time).

If you wish to lodge an application for exemption from OPD you should:

- 1) Login to your self-service portal – marriage.ag.gov.au/mcportal.
- 2) Select 'OPD exemption'.
- 3) Follow the prompts within the exemption application screen to apply for an exemption from your OPD requirement.
- 4) Ensure that you upload evidence to support your application. This must be a PDF document. If you are unable to provide the evidence in PDF format you should email your documents to marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au
- 5) Submit the application, including payment of the **\$30 non-refundable** exemption application processing fee.

Please note the exemption application is not complete and will not be considered until payment is received by the department. This means you must have submitted the application, including payment of the exemption application fee, before 31 December of the year in which you seek to be exempt from OPD. **Applications received after 31 December will not be considered.** Applications should be made as soon as possible in the calendar year, so if an exemption is not granted there is still time to complete your OPD.

You will be notified of the outcome of your exemption application in writing and your status will be updated in your self-service portal. If you believe that you have been granted an exemption and this is not shown in your portal, please contact the department.

If you are found eligible for an exemption

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If you are granted an exemption, you will not be required to complete your compulsory OPD requirement for that calendar year. The exemption applies for one year only.

If you believe you are eligible for an exemption from OPD in any subsequent year, you will need to re-apply for an exemption each year, including payment of the exemption application processing fee.

If you are not found eligible for an exemption

If you are not found eligible for the exemption, you will be notified in writing as soon as practicable and advised to complete OPD as per your usual requirement. You will be given reasons for the refusal of the exemption decision.

Where a celebrant has been identified as not meeting their OPD requirements, the Registrar may impose disciplinary measures, in accordance with the *Marriage Act 1961*, which could include a caution, additional OPD, suspension or deregistration.

What the Attorney General says it means to be a marriage celebrant

According to the Attorney General, to legally marry people in Australia, you must be an authorised marriage celebrant.

There are 4 types of authorised marriage celebrants:

- 1) Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants
- 2) Commonwealth-registered religious marriage celebrants
- 3) ministers of religion, who are registered with the state and territory registries of births, deaths and marriages
- 4) state and territory officers

A Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant is a celebrant that is registered by us.

The AG’s website says that there are over 9000 Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants in Australia. Some perform many marriages each year, while others only perform a few or none.

As a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant, you'll play an important role in your community. You will also have legal responsibilities.

Celebrancy skills are:

- fluency in an Australian Indigenous language and the ability to liaise with clients and other members of the Indigenous community if appropriate, in planning a marriage ceremony, and
- ability to conduct a marriage ceremony and to complete and deal with the required documentation in accordance with the Marriage Act and Marriage Regulations, and
- effective communication.



Scams cost Australian \$billions every year and so of course Celebrants are not immune and so each month a scam warning has been included in this newsletter however this month we will look tongue in cheek at how one 'Mark' the title used by fraudsters for their victims, deals with a message scammer

Hi, your FEDEX package with delivery code: 635478 - 6DAJ1 Is ready for pickup at: WWW.Collectmypackage.com

Hi! Welcome to online casinos! Thank you for placing a bet by entering your number into our system! £50 has been charged from your number!

Hi! Welcome to online casinos! Thank you for placing a bet by entering your number into our system! £50 has been charged from your number!

What no cancel
Cancel dont take my mony
Cancel the bet

What no cancel
Cancel dont take my mony
Cancel the bet

Thank you for placing an additional bet into our system! £100 has been charged from your number!

Thank you for placing an additional bet into our system! £100 has been charged from your number!

No stop no
Stop please cancel the bet
I beg you

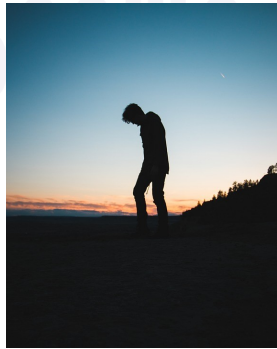
Another frequently touted response to phone call scams is where the 'Mark' answers the phone calls to say "I am very interested and your call is very important to me but can you just hold on for a moment". The phone is then placed to a child's musical toy and the most annoying tune is set to play loudly and non-stop while the 'victim' goes to another room or into the yard to read a book. On return some time later when the scammer has given up, the 'Mark' blocks the scammer's number. Another version is where the phone is placed into a pot a lidded pot which is then banged repeatedly with a wooden spoon.

Another goes like this :

Mark "Thank goodness you have called at the perfect time. What is you name....I will just connect you now" (two clicks and then....

'victim' (in broadcaster voice): We have a caller on the line right now who can tell us exactly how these work. Hello, thanks for calling into our live Intensive Investigation Podcast where we are talking about phone scammers. This program is being recorded but we are broadcasting live, and you are on the air. Now, for our listeners. What is your name caller, you are live to air ?"

Funerals Poems



A poem is meant to stimulate thought and emotion but some also evoke unexpected reactions.

Years ago I encountered a man who was tidying his life to ensure there were no loose ends. Realising the significance, I sat with him for many hours until I was able to convince him to allow me to call for help and have Police take him to a hospital where he spent the next three months. I could not fully understand what he was going through but for me the experience was exhausting, draining me spiritually, emotionally and physically and even left me somewhat traumatised.

When months later, he left a phone message for me to call him, I hesitated, I was very unsure if I could go through that all again but when I finally called him back, he was full of joy. He explained how he had been lost in his pain but that the three months in medical care had helped him to regain control of his life. He was still an outpatient but the treatment was helping and for that he was grateful.

When the opportunity arose, I undertook various suicide prevent trainings and eventually wrote the following poem in 2017.

I have used the poem at several funerals after it was selected by families, and Celebrants in both the USA & UK have also told me they have used it. I did not however expect a counselling service to use it on their webpage or a person to have it tattooed in honour of a loved or for it to be printed onto the photo another loved one so that the framed picture could be permanently on display in a public place.

Not everyone sees it that way. Of the stages of grief there are of course 'anger' and 'guilt' which can especially manifest, following a death by suicide when a surviving loved one may feel a sense of betrayal and so suggesting any poem or reading has been done with great sensitivity as we each deal with grief differently. Some time ago I posted the poem in response to an online request for a readings and the response was again surprising. On this occasion a very angry and obviously distraught Celebrant in the USA took great offence at the poem, angrily attacking me while revealing that she still felt that the death of her loved relative in a violent suicide years earlier was still deeply hurtful to her. She described suicide as "incredibly selfish" and as an horrific betrayal. She argued that suicide could never be forgiven and that peace could not be found by anyone. She went so far as to write that the poem somehow glorified suicide and hid the trauma. Whilst I completely disagreed with her, I could not argue her feelings or her own grief. Sometimes it is better to be silent.

I thought about writing a second poem to empathise with her

grief but could see how that would be a hindrance instead of helpful. I hope that Celebrant eventually found peace but I would, however strongly recommend that any Celebrant going through grief, should seek respite and perhaps counselling before returning to this wonderful profession as it is completely unhelpful and unhealthy to demonstrate or manifest a powerful and painful grief when leading a service. We are there to honour the lost loved one and to help and guide those who remain; not suffer in their presence.

When I recently posted the poem yet again, I received messages and phone calls of gratitude.

You can find more on my webpage:

⇒ [Poems and Readings for Funerals](#)

⇒ [Poems & Reading for Weddings](#)

Here though is the poem I have written about:

YOU ASK ME WHY

(copyright: Lou Szymkow, December 2017)

I know you didn't hear me, I didn't tell you all,
I knew you couldn't understand
And besides, I didn't want to burden you all
So I didn't tell you everything,
it was my burden to struggle through.
I am not a coward, you know, I just couldn't
find a way to undo,
why I had to carry this burden, this inhuman
demand.
How could you have helped me, when I myself
couldn't understand?
I tried to fight daily but it just wouldn't go away.
I knew I couldn't impose on you and so knew I
had to go away.
My life was often wonderful and there were
times when I felt blessed.
I had no thought of dying, just of finding rest,
My body was a vessel, my thoughts and brain in
disdain,
I just couldn't live a life, without ending this
wretched pain.
It was just too much to bear, this suffocating,
darkest air.
but now it is such a relief to see the sun once
more
I am free at last, there is sunshine evermore,
So remember me as freedom, in everlasting joy,
I lived and loved, worked and played, I tried to
do it all.
So think of only the best of me, and feel the
warmth of a better deed,
Keep me in your memories, and let loves' gentle
thought always be your creed

FORCED MARRIAGE. **WHAT TO DO?**

The apparent level of 'panic' expressed by some Celebrants over the change to laws, requiring separate 'consent meetings' has been surprising. Some are expressing a fear of being placed into danger by refusing to undertake a ceremony if they discover consent is not active.

The obvious question to ask is *"What did you do before because the only thing that has really changed is that we have separate consent meetings?"*

Even after the Consent Meetings, consent can be withdrawn at any time right up until the Vows are exchanged because when they exchange those words "I take you to be..." is when they are legally married.

As it has always been illegal to perform a forced marriage, were Celebrants previously not checking consent and just going ahead with a ceremony to guarantee payment out of fear that the couple would go elsewhere and that they would miss out on a wedding while ignoring the illegalities and danger to the victim?

Let's look at what we find in the OPD training and in the Guidelines.

- ◊ [How can I help a person at risk of forced marriage to stay safe?](#)
- ◊ [Who do I call?](#)
- ◊ [What should I do?](#)

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.

Who do I call?

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**
- If there is no immediate risk of harm but there are indicators of forced marriage present, call 131 AFP (131 237) or complete the online report a crime form on the human trafficking page of the AFP website.
- 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

- 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.



- You can also provide anonymous information about criminal activity to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or www.crimestoppers.com.au.



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
- **Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights**
Tel: 03 9481 3000
- **The Freedom Partnership—Salvation Army**
Tel: 02 9211 5794
Email: endslavery@ae.salvationarmy.org.au



What should I do?

You seek assistance.

The [Forced Marriage Community Pack](#), available on the Department of Home Affairs' website, 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.

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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. 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. My Blue Sky is an easy to use 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.

Want to learn more about forced marriage and other forms of modern slavery?

Take one of the free, self-paced courses available online.

[Online courses \(mybluesky.org.au\)](http://mybluesky.org.au)

Or Contact My Blue Sky for more information:

Call: +61 2 9514 8115

SMS text: +61 481 070 844

Email: help@mybluesky.org.au

In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000)

THREE MEN CHARGED OVER ALLEGED FORCED MARRIAGE OF TWO CHILDREN IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) issued a Media Release in July 2024 to say that the AFP had charged three men over the alleged forced marriage of two teenage children in Perth, the first time the AFP has laid charges in Western Australia for this crime.

The two men are related to the boy and the other who is related to the girl, faced the Perth Magistrates Court today 26 July, 2024 charged with one count of causing a person to enter into a forced

marriage in circumstances of aggravation, contrary to sections 270.7B(1) and 270.8 of the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth). The maximum penalty for the offence is nine years' imprisonment.

The matter was adjourned to August, 2024 but no new information has been released though media were reminded of their obligations under section 15YR of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth), prohibiting the release of information which might identify the children.

Police allege the teenagers, one of whom was aged between 13 and 15 and the other who was 17, wanted to date each other but the relatives told them they would have to be married for cultural reasons.

The men then allegedly facilitated the marriage of the children in an official religious ceremony in 2023.

AFP Detective Superintendent Peter Chwal said the definition of a forced marriage was when a person married without freely and fully consenting, because they had been coerced, threatened, or deceived, or because they were incapable of understanding the nature and effect of a marriage ceremony, for reasons including age or mental capacity.

"The legal age for marriage in Australia is 18; and while a child aged 16 to 18 can obtain permission from a Court to marry, the person they wed must be an adult," he said.

Det-Supt Chwal said forced marriage was a complex crime because it often involved family members as victims and perpetrators, and the number one priority for the AFP was the wellbeing and safety of victims.

"The AFP's key focus is to disrupt and prevent this crime – by building awareness of the laws in Australia, the warning signs of forced marriage, and the help that can be provided to victims," he said.

"If victims do not feel comfortable speaking directly to police, there are many services and agencies which can provide support to help ensure their safety."

Det-Supt Chwal said forced marriage was not limited to any cultural group, religion or ethnicity.

"Anyone can be a victim of forced marriage, regardless of their age, gender or sexual orientation," Det-Supt Chwal said.

Forced marriage has been illegal in Australia since 2013 and can apply to legally recognised marriages, cultural or religious ceremonies, marriages which occur in Australia or where a person is taken overseas to be married, and can include the conduct of those involved in facilitating the forced marriage.

There are four very important words in life: love, honesty, truth, respect. Without these in your life, you have nothing.



New AFP Human Exploitation Community Officers (HECO) Targeting Forced Marriage



I have had no direct word back from the AFP on my request for better support for Celebrants but on 27/10/2024, the AFP issued the following media release:

Dedicated AFP officers specialising in victim-based crime including human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation have been deployed across Australia to boost community engagement and reporting to law enforcement, as cases of exploitation rise across the country. The new AFP Human Exploitation Community Officers (HECOs) support the AFP Human Trafficking and Child Protection teams in providing help to vulnerable communities that may fall victim to these crimes.

The officers deliver targeted outreach and education relating to human exploitation with the aim of providing an opportunity for crime intervention, preventing the victimisation across the online child sexual exploitation and human trafficking crime types.

Between 2023-2024, reports to the AFP of human trafficking, encompassing forced marriage, servitude, forced labour, exit trafficking and slavery increased to 382, compared to 340 reports in the 2022-2023 financial year.

Reports of online child sexual exploitation to the AFP-led Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) have increased yearly with more than 58,000 reports in the past financial year.

The AFP HECO's deliver targeted outreach and education to help communities to understand their rights and aim to increase reporting to police and disrupt criminal activity before it occurs.

The rollout of the HECO capability commenced in 2023 and now features five specialised officers stationed at AFP Commands across the country including in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.

Informed by AFP intelligence and real time operational outcomes, the HECO's focus support to high-risk communities that are vulnerable to human exploitation.

The officers deliver tailored information and interventions to prevent human trafficking, including forced marriage, along with engagement programs such as the AFP's [ThinkUKnow](#), which aims to prevent online child sexual exploitation.

AFP Commander Helen Schneider said the rollout of

HECOs provided a significant boost to the AFP's capability and commitment to protecting vulnerable members of the community.

"This capability provides an important opportunity for law enforcement to intervene to protect potential victims and to prevent criminal offending from occurring, and we know that education is key," Commander Schneider said.

"These officers are engaged with these high-risk and vulnerable communities. We know that victims or potential victims of human trafficking and slavery offences may not actually understand the crimes that have been committed against them, or they may not even identify as victims."

HECO scenario examples of community engagement and intervention:

Online child sexual exploitation

- The HECO's will engage with relevant stakeholders in the community to ensure the delivery of important prevention and response messaging to minimise the impacts of online child sexual exploitation within vulnerable communities.
- Resources will be utilised to offer education opportunities as well as community engagement to strengthen the relationships between these vulnerable groups and law enforcement.
- Resources will address topics such as online grooming and sextortion to assist the community in identifying unsafe situations and to encourage them to seek help and support when needed.
- ACCCE intelligence suggests approximately only 12 per cent of victims report to law enforcement highlighting the need for targeted education and awareness opportunities around the theme of online child sexual exploitation.

FORCED MARRIAGE

- The AFP will engage with schools following multiple reports of persons suspected to be at risk of forced marriage.
- The HECO will deliver presentations and resources on human trafficking with a focus on forced marriage and options available to seek assistance.

- [AFP rolls out specialised Human Exploitation Community Officers](#)
[| Australian Federal Police](#)

Craig Moran, a Civil Celebrant since 1995, was an experienced corporate businessman who reinvented himself as a Civil Marriage Celebrant and



Funeral Celebrant **Craig**. **was on the AMC executive for about 9 years beginning in 2013 including stints as Treasurer and AMC President. He was a presenter at the 2023 AMC Conference and having performed over a 1,000 wedding and several thousand funerals between golf games and has encountered many diverse situations. In this article, he tells us of an experience he had that raised concerns over when consent.**

Uncertain of Consent & an S.O.T.

By Craig Moran



Potential groom contacted me re marrying his “fiancé” who was terminally ill and in a cancer ward. Wanting to lodge a NOIM and needed a shortening of time. Let’s just call them SALLY & JOHN for the sake of the story. I met him at the hospital and completed the NOIM downstairs in coffee shop. He took me up to her room and said “wait here” (left me outside the room) – then he came back out with Sally’s passport.

I said “I need to speak with her and she needs to sign the NOIM and I need to witness her signature” – he said “*She’s sleeping, I don’t want to disturb her*”. (Alarm bell Number 1)

I then went and spoke with the Nursing Unit Manager and said I needed a letter from Sally’s oncologist, outlining her condition in support of a shortening of time. The NUM gave me the doctor’s contact details.

I rang the specialist’s rooms and outlined my request to her P-A. She asked could I email some info. I did. Next day the specialist rang me saying “I have a real problem with this. Sally has been a patient of mine for some years and I have grown quite fond of her. I know that John is pushing for this but she has confided in me that she is not keen. They don’t live together and I know that they have had an on-off relationship, and she owns her own place”. (Alarm bell Number 2 – deafening)

John keeps chasing me up and I said that I had made a request to the oncologist – that we could not lodge a shortening application without the supporting doc’s. The doctor calls me to let me know that John has been quite stroppy with the hospital staff as to why this has not happened. John then emails me and says “The doctor is being quite difficult so we will just forget about the shortening and wait out the one-month notice period”. Note – I have not at this stage been able to meet Sally.

I contact the doctor and tell her all this and say that I will decline the wedding as I have severe doubts re consent (if Sally survives the month). Doctor agrees. Couple weeks later Sally is moved to another hospital that said doctor doesn’t work at – original doctor gives me the name of the oncology registrar at second hospital. I call him and have conversation. He calls me back and says he has severe reservations about Sally’s consent – he believes John and John’s family are pushing the barrow, so to speak.

A week or so later – Sally passes away. Case closed.



Another Prosecution

A New South Wales man has been jailed on 4 October, 2024 for attempting to orchestrate separate forced marriages for two of his teenage children,

who were then aged 15 and 17.

The man, 51, was sentenced by the Downing Centre District Court to a total of three years and four months' imprisonment for both counts, with a non-parole period of one year and 11 months.

This matter follows the [first successful conviction and sentencing for forced marriage in Australia in July](#).

The AFP Eastern Command Human Trafficking Team began an investigation in February 2022, after the two children sought help from NSW Police in the hours after escaping from their father's home in regional NSW.

The siblings moved to Australia from overseas in 2021 with their father.

Once in Australia, the siblings learned that their father was actively attempting to organise their respective marriages, against their wishes. The siblings were unsure of the people to whom they would be married, or when the weddings would occur.

In the days following the children's escape, AFP officers executed a search warrant at the father's residence, from which they seized mobile phones containing evidence of the attempts made to arrange the marriages, including messages about planning the weddings.

This matter was prosecuted by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Commonwealth) and on 17 October, 2023, the man pleaded guilty to two counts of attempting forced marriage, contrary to sections 11.1(1), 270.7B and 270.8 of the *Criminal Code 1995* (Cth).

The siblings have been supported by a specialist youth organisation working with children and young people affected by forced marriage.

AFP Commander Kate Ferry said Australia was not immune to human trafficking, and the crime was often under-reported because people might not be aware they were victims or that they could seek help from police.

"There are usually two types of forced marriages. One is where unwilling participants are threatened,

deceived or coerced to enter a marriage. The other is where someone cannot legally consent to marriage due to their age," Commander Ferry said.

"This crime type is one that generally involves perpetrators offending against younger, more vulnerable family members. In many situations, a young victim does not want their family to be 'in trouble' with police, leading to the offending being unreported."

AFP Sergeant Chantal Pravaz said the prosecution would not have been possible without the victims' courage and bravery in coming forward.

"The victims placed their trust in the AFP and their openness assisted our investigation," she said.

"The AFP is here to help all victims of human trafficking and we will work tirelessly to ensure the wellbeing of victims who seek to escape their situation. Forced marriage reports are treated on a case-by-case basis to ensure the most appropriate resolution for victims. Each case is treated with compassion, care and respect.

"It is important to remember that not all reports result in a prosecution – sometimes we can get a positive result by helping a person leave a difficult situation, or by directly educating everyone involved so a marriage doesn't occur."

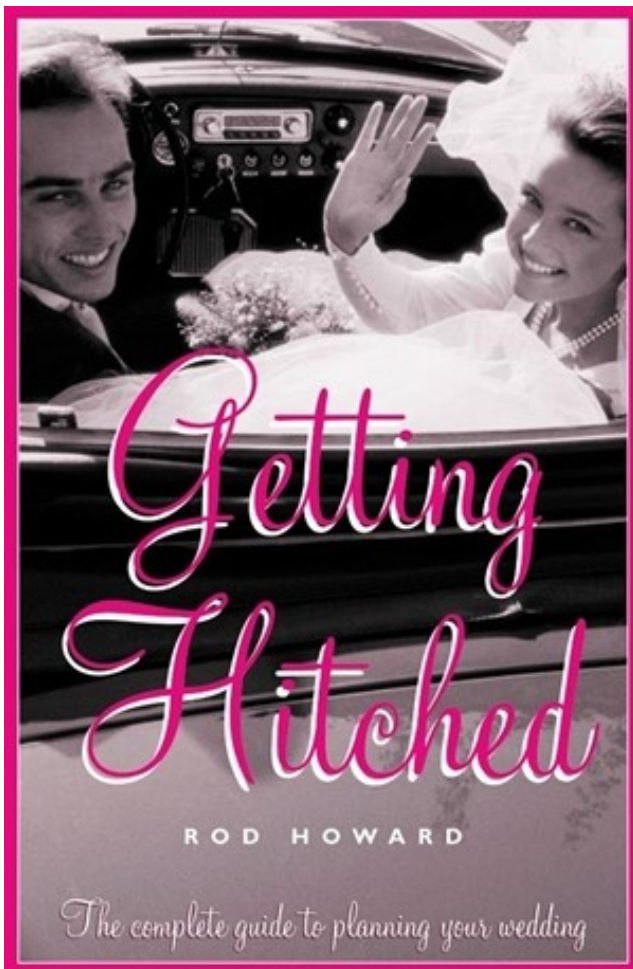
The number of human trafficking complaints to the AFP has increased, with the AFP receiving 382 reports – 91 being forced marriage allegations – across the 2023-2024 financial year. This is an increase of 42 reports from the previous financial year (2022-2023), when the AFP received 340 reports. However, it remains a crime type that police believe is under-reported.

If you or someone you know is a victim of human trafficking, help is available. For information and confidential advice, please contact the AFP by calling 131AFP, [Beyond Blue](#) or [My Blue Sky](#).

For more information on human trafficking, including the signs a person may be at risk of being trafficked, visit [our website](#).

Media are reminded of their obligations under section 15A of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 (NSW), section 15YR of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth), and section 105 of the Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW).

<https://www.afp.gov.au/news-centre/media-release/nsw-man-jailed-over-attempted-forced-marriages-his-children>



The Herald Sun described this book as the complete guide to everything you'll need to travel the road to matrimony in style to get hitched. The book cover, which also in clues the Herald Sun review in full, tells us that Rod Howard, the author, is an Australian writer and journalist who married of the first time at the hoary age of 36 and that he was at that time desperately seeking nuptial guidance, was dismayed that some of the most available material might have been written by a reclusive puritan in 1832. The cover adds that he

thinks that marriage is the last bastion for the romantic revolutionary in a conformist age and that the only true republic is that of two united in love.

The book, written in his first year of marriage, goes into a variety of ideas and suggestions including avoiding the pitfalls of parental intrusion and making the caterer your friend!

There are sections on ancient and modern wedding customs, elopement, marrying overseas, second-plus weddings, traditions and superstitions, plus DIY vows, alternative venues and more!

The book was published in 2000 by Hardie Grant Books but is still current in many aspects. The information on legals though across the worlds and in particular in Australia, is either outdated or perhaps in error and some of the historical information and explanation of traditions are occasionally dubious though for the most part are very well researched. Some traditions and rituals are given more detail than others but are nonetheless informative.

There are instructions and suggestions on different ceremonies, venues selection, scripts and more.

On almost every page there is a side note offering additional titbit of entertaining information.

There is even a section devoted entirely to synonyms for use in vows and a selection of different versions of vows.

Getting Hitched offers guidance on virtually every aspect of a wedding and such is a valuable resource for couples and Celebrants keen to explore ideas such as soft boiled egg soup, the Egyptian wedding circus and Indonesian teeth filling, I'll be going back the book to reread some sections on rituals, multicultural weddings, readings (*which I glossed over*), superstitions and of course 'Beliefs and the bizarre'.

In all, it is an entertaining read and as a Celebrant, the historical information, accurate or not, was particularly interesting.

https://www.hardiegrant.com/au/publishing/bookfinder/book/getting-hitched_-a-wedding-roadmap-by-rod-howard/9781864980813



shutterstock - 1505970434





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 couples 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 suggestion to couples and clients. Here are just some dates & events to consider but you can find so much more on the huge list at [Event guide - Shoalhaven - South Coast NSW](#) or <https://www.internationaldays.org/>

- 2 November 2024 **Husky Running Festival**
Hawke Street Corner of Bowen Street, Huskisson
- 5 November 2024 **Melbourne Cup**
- 11 November 2024 **Remembrance Day**
- 12 November 2024 Lou & Jenny Szymkow Celebrate 47 years of marriage
- 13 November 2024 **CoCA meets in Canberra**
- 14 November 2024 **MLCS meeting with association's representatives**
- 16 November 2024 **Gymnastics NSW Festival of Gymnastics**
90 Cambewarra Rd, Bomaderry NSW 2541
- 24 November 2024, **Berry Motro Fair**
Coolangatta Estate, Bolong Road, Coolangatta NSW, Australia



Education Session
November 27th 7pm
Enza Pacetta
from Gallagher Insurance

Enza and her team from Gallagher Insurance. This will be a short presentation on the importance of Insurance coverage and will provide time



loads of Q&A

AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE CELEBRANTS

A quick look back

- 05 November 1977 Lorraine Gawne performed her first ceremony in Grong Grong
- 6 November 2008 'The Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Australia' (ACMCA) changed its name to Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc (AMC)
- 26 November 2011 Sarah May Alexander was registered as a Marriage Celebrant
- November 2013 Ann Dally replaced Keith Lammond as AMC President
- 5 November 2016 Ann Dally was bestowed Life Membership of AMC and Chris Hale elected as President

COORDINATOR COMMENTS

A Life Celebrant
Lou Szymkow jp

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Imagine a naïve 19/20 year old boy, having grown up on a small farm in a tiny town rural town west of Sydney, holding down his first full time job, and owning little more than a motorbike and a few bits of furniture, coming to you to say he wanted to marry his childhood sweetheart, the girl he first met at high school and after leaving high school, met again by pure chance on a train just 6 weeks earlier. I suspect you might think him a little overly optimistic and perhaps unrealistic, but that was this young bloke 47 years ago. We married in her mother's Catholic church, and within a few years not only owned a newly built, small cottage, but had founded a moderately successful business as we started a family. It was a different time. Interest rates were much lower and so were wages and cost of living. The street we lived in was filled with young families all on a budget. At that time, people commonly married young and were parents by 22 and so we were in company.

Years later, we are grandparents, and loving, living on the magnificent south coast. When our own children reached 19, we were shocked into reality when our oldest reached 19 and we finally realised just how young we were and for the first time realised why our own parents had suggested we wait to marry but we were headstrong and had a life planned out. As we were marrying in a Catholic Church, we did have to undergo marriage preparation meetings and were asked a number of leading questions that helped clarify and make certain that we wished to marry and understood what we were doing.

As a Civil Celebrant, most of my couples are over 30 and only a few are in their twenties. One girl who was just 18, lodged her NOIM and I thought had that same optimism that I had all those years ago but I never heard from her partner to complete the process, or indeed, from her again.

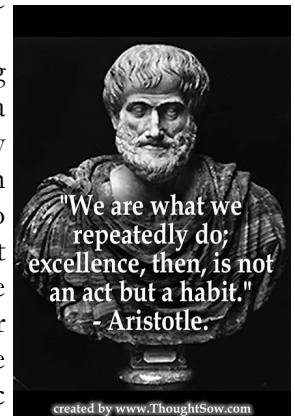
We are each faced with life and we each choose how to live it. Those choices define us.

One choice my wife and I made, was to travel as often as we could and that travel taught us so much more about the world, ourselves and our own country. We have been to some 27 countries. Ubud in Bali, Viena and Venice are some of our favourites.

When we boarded a coach in London, there were people of a numerous 'races' on the tour and when the guide ran through a list of countries to establish where each passenger had come from there was mostly silence until he mentioned Australia and a dozen different accents yelled out an Aussie, Aussie, Aussie and so I was reminded of just how multicultural Australia is. It was on that same journey that I made certain that at every stop, I visited a grocery store. Not that I needed groceries necessarily but because being among locals in their day to day activities taught me more about their culture and lifestyle. We learned a few words in every country, enough to get by, and by the end of a six week journey, two Americans from the tour came to us to explain just how much they had enjoyed "travelling with locals". I had to remind them that we were Aussies but they went on to explain how they recognised our appreciation of each and every culture and each and every city and country we had visited and so they enjoyed their journey so much more because they shared in our joy and were more engrossed in the cultures.

I remember that after returning from Europe, I had to attend a court that I had been in many times before but on this occasion as I stood waiting to be called to the witness box, I stood gazing at the building next door to the court house. I had seen that other building hundreds of times before but had never noticed its classic beauty. Had we not travelled quite as much, I might have never learned to appreciate what was directly before me. As Celebrants we get to share in the beauty of other's lives, languages and cultures, we get to share the most precious moments of their lives. Aristotle said "*The more we know, the more we know we don't know*" or in other words "*The more we learn, the more we learn how little we know*".

Being a Celebrant is most definitely the best job one can have and we must never stop learning.



The more we know about the cultures of others, the more open-minded, tolerant & global we become.

-SAMIR EL A. MOROCCO

