

AMENDMENTS TO THE MARRIAGE ACT

I would like to submit an objection to the proposed amendment to the Marriage Act concerning the annual fees to be introduced to remain a registered Marriage Celebrant.

I became a celebrant after my retirement and my reasons for doing this were not income based. I really wanted to be able to participate in something I believed in and would enjoy being involved in.

I completed my course believing that I had achieved a qualification which would last until a time when I did not longer feel I could fulfill the requirements of the position.

The annual fee proposed, I feel, discriminates against the celebrants who do not have the prestige of the celebrants who have been registered for many years and are known through their previous clients. Therefore, they seem to be able to charge higher fees and obtain more work. I have spoken to some of these celebrants who are happy about the amendments as they feel "it will prevent the competition from the other celebrants who charge minimal fees and therefore increase their client base". This would happen because celebrants who don't earn as much (due to the fact that weddings are fairly seasonal and mostly only happen on Saturdays) would not be able to cover the costs of stationary, equipment, yearly professional development courses and all the other expenses involved including travel.

Also, if a celebrant is late paying the "registration" fee they will be deregistered. This sounds simple, until you take into account that ceremonies are usually planned up to 12 months prior to the date and a rapport has inevitably built up between celebrant and client. The celebrant could be deregistered shortly before the planned ceremony is to take place and at that stage most celebrants would probably already be booked up therefore finding it impossible to find a replacement at short notice.

If this is a "cost recovery" exercise I would suggest it would be fairer to maybe charge a fee for EACH marriage registration when submitted to Births Deaths and Marriages. This way it creates an even "playing field" as the more marriages performed, the more the celebrant would be charged.

Anyway that is my suggestion and belief. I would hate to see some really professional celebrants being "squeezed" out of their desired line of work because it is not cost effective, making it possible for the remaining celebrants to charge anything they liked. There are a lot of young couples who cannot afford the big wedding but still want something very special. Celebrants will have to take into account the outgoing expenses to be covered when quoting prices.

I feel this amendment could have wide reaching and devastating results in many ways. I hope you take my views into account,

Thank you