

I welcome the privilege of being able to make a submission for **Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2013** and **Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2013**

My points are -

- There are too many celebrants
- The initial training is insufficient
- Ongoing OPD is vital but ineffective in its current form
- I look forward to the Marcel system and its benefits
- I agree with an annual registration fee
- Celebrant Associations provide usefull and vital assistance
- Insurance should be encouraged
- Better use of CoCA to assist MLCS

### **Too Many Celebrants**

Whatever the reasons, the number of celebrants was allowed to rise without an understanding of the consequences. We now have too many celebrants for each to get sufficient experience in both the legal aspects and the ceremonial aspects. I am sure MLCS and the BDMs have both the public and its own interests at heart and require celebrants to be precise when it comes to the law and regulation, at the same time being sufficiently ceremonial when it comes to providing a quality service to its marrying couples.

How many is too many ? We have about five times too many celebrants than needed. There are over 10,000 celebrants at the moment, there needs to be between 2,000 and 3,000 for celebrants to get sufficient experience in wedding legalities and formalities.

There needs to be some sort of cap or regulation of the number of new celebrants being activated and a serious reduction of the number of celebrants in total.

### **Initial training is insufficient**

I did my training in 2009 and I must say, looking back, it was quite lacking in quality, knowledge and the range of material was limited, which I only found out later as I commenced my celebrancy. The information itself was mediocre and certainly did not go far enough. Being comfortable on the internet, I was able to research at the same time, much like a university student would, and found much more material on the web, about the subjects than that which was given in the material. Hence I came out passing, but with more knowledge than was probably required to get a mark. I also found in my first twenty or so weddings, I was learning on the job, which is not really what marrying couples want to experience. Having talked to other recent celebrants, many feel they were factoryed through for profit only and came out with insufficient knowledge.

### **Ongoing OPD could be vastly improved**

Celebrants vitally need ongoing OPD, including those who have been in it for a while, to keep up with advances, legislative changes, trends, information and knowledge. The current OPD appears to have no structure whatsoever, is delivered by people whose only aim is revenue. The only current measure on celebrants undertaking opd is their attending a class lecture, nothing else. No qualitative measure.

There needs to be structured training, planned for the coming years, delivered professionally, preferably in an online learning environment, and with a proper assessment at the end , with provision for review and revision of marks and topics.

## **Marcel system**

I commend the development of the Marcel system and look forward to using it.

As an example, when the Victorian BDM went online, I took up that service immediately and it has given me great and real benefit.

I look forward to being able to use the Marcel system for the benefit of my couples and the MLCS.

## **Annual Registration fee and Initial Application Fee**

I am happy to pay a nominal fee to support the systems which provide us with the ability to communicate and work online. This is a great time saver and keeps everything up to date instantly.

I think \$180 fee would have been more realistic, but realise that the \$240 might deter a few more celebrants from continuing which is not a bad thing.

I think the Initial Application Fee should in fact be higher than the \$600 and would have been better pitched in the \$1,200 to \$1,500 range. Not as pure cost recovery for the initial submission but the fact that newer celebrants will have, and require, a much higher support requirement. It will also ensure only serious candidates apply.

## **Celebrant Associations**

I think MLCS should do more to promote and encourage celebrants to join associations. Even perhaps some financial incentive.

Associations provide information to their members on group email systems, much of this information helps and assists newer members. This cuts down the amount of queries going to BDMs and also to MLCS.

Encouragement of celebrants to join associations can reduce costs in fewer basic queries to BDM & MLCS.

## **Public Liability, Personal Indemnity and Copyright Insurance**

Having been in business, I was aware of PI/PL and Copyright Insurance, but I am astounded by the number of celebrants who are not aware of this type of insurance or why it is required. Obviously it does not come up in training.

Celebrant Associations are able though, to promote this to their members, as part of their service.

## **Coalition of Celebrants Associations**

I think the CoCA organisation provides a vital role in bringing information from the grass roots to the MLCS and AG's departments and clearly needs more recognition.

All associations should be part of CoCA, and MLCS should ensure all associations are members of CoCA.

Individuals should put aside their differences for the benefit of all their associations, marriage celebrants and the marrying public. MLCS should not tolerate associations not taking part in CoCA and trying to go it alone.

CoCA has much to contribute to MLCS and AG's and can ensure that trends being adopted closely follow the reality in the industry. AG's dept should consider funding CoCA to ensure its future.

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