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26<sup>th</sup> April, 2013

Committee Secretary  
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Inquiry into Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2013  
And the Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2013**

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the abovementioned Amendments.

I make this submission as an authorised Civil Marriage Celebrant. I completed my studies at Yeronga TAFE in July 2005 but due to the "capping system" had to wait until September 2007 until my appointment. At that time there were around 6,000 authorised celebrants in Australia – today there are approximately 11,000 with around 50 new celebrants being authorised each month.

I love being a celebrant. I work hard to present a professional service to the community and I enjoy the sense of worth and fulfilment that being a celebrant provides. Costs such as Ongoing Professional Development, Association memberships, marriage stationery, celebrant software, advertising, equipment maintenance, travel, insurance, clothing, all continue to rise each year, but the number of people getting married do not – and yet more celebrants continue to flood the marketplace.

**ITEM 1**

**Schedule 1, Part 1 - Annual Celebrant Registration Charge**

If there is to be an *Annual Celebrant Registration Fee*, it should apply to ALL marriage celebrants, not just Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants, otherwise it is discrimination. The other two categories of celebrants aren't required to attend OPD and don't have the costs associated with maintaining equipment, advertising, insurance.

- I oppose the Annual Registration Fee unless it applies to all categories of Celebrants.

**ITEM 2**

**Schedule 1, Part 2 – Fee for applying to become a marriage celebrant**

- I do support the introduction of an application fee for processing of all new marriage celebrants.

Schedule 2 – Other amendments

ITEM 3

Subsections 39H (1) and (2) – performance reviews

Removing the five year obligation from the Marriage Act will take away accountability from the MCLS for regular review of celebrants. It must be noted the government argued that cost recovery was necessary to enable it to meet its regulatory responsibilities for checking that celebrants had met all requirements during a minimum of a 5-year period. So it could appear rather contradictory that these Bills will in effect *increase* the number of reviews five-fold by way of an annual survey.

- I oppose the removal of 5 yearly reviews of life-time appointments.

*Acceptance of Australian passport as evidence of the date and place of birth of the Party.*

I support the Amendment of Section 42(1)(b) of the Marriage Act to allow an Australian Passport to be presented as evidence of date and place of birth of a party seeking to marry.

My appointment as a celebrant was supposedly for life. My couples often book me 12 months in advance, so I am naturally concerned about the negative impact of conversion of lifetime registration of civil marriage celebrants to a one year renewable appointment, and its impact on the confidence of the marrying public.

- I am not in favour of conversion of my lifetime appointment as a celebrant to a 1 Year appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Paterson  
Civil Marriage Celebrant