

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
PO BOX 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Amendments to the Marriage Bills

I would like to call upon the following points.

**Typical celebrant costs.**

**You propose** a \$240 fee does this include GST

A statutory limit of \$600 to be set (does this include GST) and to be indexed according to the consumer price index. The actual amount of the annual registration charge is still to be determined by the Minister by legislative instrument? This includes setting up the system for the imposition of an annual celebrant registration charge.

**Please see** table below

**You propose** an annual time limit (12 months) the registration dependent on the payment of the annual registration fee and completing the survey within a given time. If not, then, the provision of immediate and automatic de-registration! Why? What happens to the bride and groom in this instance when they cannot have the celebrant of their choice when they no longer after 12 months. What happened to the 5 years?

Why are we following the New Zealand system?

**I would like** to see that we revert back to the 5 year system.

**You propose** these changes only to the Commonwealth registered Marriage Celebrant. Why are these changes not across on all categories ie Ministers, State and Territory Officers? This is proclaimed under 26 of the ACT.

There is an influx of celebrants. We have been advised that you cannot restrict the number of new celebrants. We were also advised that ethnic background was one of the key reasons of appointing these celebrants. It is known that they not only service these ethnic backgrounds. There was also a time when location was a reason for an appointment.

**My personal** view is that this is unfair and unjust!

**Conflict of interest**

This provision concerns the right of enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work, including remuneration??

Many Celebrants are performing less than 10 weddings a year. This may be due to the area they live in and the number of celebrants in the area. My concern is that these celebrants may be the ones that are experienced ones. The ones we call our 'Buddies' ! Yes, this may seem like a big deal, well it is. Without these experienced celebrants the new ones cannot rely on expertise. No one can replace these older celebrants. What you are doing is pushing them aside. The questions maybe trivial, but getting reassurance and to know that we are all on the right path, is better than a being fined. I belong to an Association where we help each other and rely on experience celebrants. Don't take this away!

## Conflict of interest (continued)

**Working conditions** - Working outdoors rain hail or shine. It could be 5 degrees, it could be 40 degrees. The show must go on so to speak. Blessed are the times when we are indoors. Favourable conditions?

**Remuneration** - Given that there is 1000 new celebrants coming in every year, and that a wedding cake costs more than a marriage ceremony, in fact I think that most parts of the wedding costs more than the marriage ceremony!

There is a large drop in the numbers of celebrants doing weddings each year. There is talk if you advertise more, have expensive designer clothes, fancy designer shoes (everyone looks at the celebrants shoes, that is a fact). Given this we would get more weddings? I think that there is more to this than what I have just mentioned. An average fee for a celebrant is \$500 the average number marriage ceremonies a year is 10 if you can get this amount!

May I show you an example of expenses, please! As you can see from the table below an average fee of \$500, times the number of 10 ceremonies means an average celebrant is running at a loss. No profit here. How can this be justified by calling this a business with remuneration???

According to the table below the figures do not add up to a profit only a loss.

Average Cost of a Ceremony per year	
Insurance	\$200.00
Association Fees	\$150.00
OPD	\$150.00
Stationery	\$100.00
Printing	\$100.00
Business Cards	\$250.00
Internet	\$720.00
Phone	\$660.00
Fuel	\$100.00
Car Maintenance	\$500.00
tolls, parking	\$300.00
Website running costs	\$500.00
Advertising	\$1,000.00
Expo	\$1,000.00
service of computer equipment	\$500.00
Incidental equipment required for a ceremony	\$100.00
Miscellaneous	\$100.00
Hours spent with client - initial 2 hours , email and phone 10 hours, ceremony 2 hours = 14 hours minimum say @ \$20 per hour	\$280.00
	\$6,710.00
<b>Adding on the proposed \$240 annual fee</b>	\$240.00
<b>AVERAGE COSTS PER YEAR</b>	<b>\$6,950.00</b>
<b>Plus</b> -one off costs of PA system, computer, printer, office materials, props, table and chairs which are used for The Ceremony. These are not included in the average yearly costs.	
<b>Note:</b> No clothing, shoes etc added in this costing.	

In conclusion I would like to point out that I oppose the following.

- The propose annual time limit. I would like it to remain under the present system of 5 years.
- The propose a \$240 fee or any fee. If there is to be a fee it should be for all categories not just for Commonwealth registered Marriage Celebrant, but on all categories i.e. Ministers, State and Territory Officers.
- The influx of celebrants as there is not enough work presently. The average for 2011 year was 7 for 100 celebrants. How can we cope with influx every year of 1000 new celebrants? I comment was made to me and I am not sure of the truth. But, under the new employment scheme, unemployed people are asked to study a course. I was told that Celebrant course was used to meet this criteria and is given out freely. I would like to know if this is the case and the reason for so many celebrants. Do they know how much it costs to be a celebrant?

I await your response.

Yours sincerely