

## **Submission on the Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2013**

I have been a celebrant since my appointment in 2009. At that time, the number of celebrants was not capped. Until that time and only a small amount were appointed each year, which allowed for attrition of Celebrants through retirement and other factors. The appointment of celebrants was then opened up which allowed a large number of celebrants through.

Given the number of current celebrants, each celebrant can now average 7 weddings per year (based on roughly 11,000 celebrants and 77,000 civil marriages a year). Not only has my potential income diminished considerably due to this but my fees per wedding have also reduced due to undercutting by celebrants competing for the scarce number of weddings. I currently earn well under \$20000 per year

The proposed fee for celebrants each year will have an impact on me in a number of ways:

(1) reduce my ability to maintain celebrant insurance and participate in a celebrant organization

(which can be important for professional development and to ensure I am up to date with Celebrant matters)

(2) increase the possibility of becoming de-registered if I cannot afford the fee – celebrants are

Appointed for life but this fee will operate to override that life appointment

Since the number of celebrants have been increased by the Attorney-General's department, my

weddings have dropped from 2 per week to 2 or 3 a month and my fee for a wedding has dropped

from \$420 to \$350 and sometimes \$300. My overheads per wedding are roughly \$150 and the time I spend on each couple with meetings, paperwork, writing the ceremony, rehearsal, travel

And delivering the ceremony, as well as registering it afterwards is 15 hours. Overheads include

Petrol, maintaining a car to get to ceremonies, cost of celebrant insurance and ongoing

Professional development, PA system (approximately \$2500 with a life of only a year or so more

as the government has recently sold the bandwidth to media companies necessitating a replacement PA system) and consumables such as printer ink, paper, batteries and office

equipment (as we are required to maintain a home office), official stationery which has tripled in

price, telephone and postage costs. For example, next week I have a ceremony with a rehearsal

(total kilometres will be 200km with the rehearsal and the ceremony the following day). My total

fee for that ceremony is \$350. I have had three meetings with the couple as well as writing their

ceremony, communicating by email with them for ceremony changes and preparing and lodging their paperwork.

My profit will be a profit of \$200. Or approximately \$4.00/hr.

If this fee is introduced, I would ask that there also be an exemption for low income earners and

I submit that anyone earning under \$20,000 per year should be exempt from paying this fee

I also submit that the remote area exemption should still apply but that the committee should

Take into account that some remote areas such as the Whitsundays have an incredibly high Number of ceremonies each year (some celebrants do as many as 200 weddings a year there).

Therefore, a fairer exemption system would take into account the income of a celebrant rather Than the location of the celebrant. Celebrants in remote locations that have few weddings per Year would still be covered by an exemption.

Therefore, I would ask the committee to carefully consider the issue of the celebrant fee.

Celebrants receive little from the Attorney-General's Department once they are registered and I

Do not anticipate that this would change.

Since becoming a celebrant, the Marriage Celebrants Section through their actions have decreased my income,

Increased my costs by reducing the providers of ongoing professional development and so increasing their fees, and has

Provided very little in the way of assistance or communication. I do not believe that a registration fee is justified.

I do think a one off fee to cover their costs in considering a celebrant appointment is fair.

I was appointed for life and I do not think that reducing this to a yearly appointment is fair.