



4 May 2013

TO: Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

**Submission to
THE SENATE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

Dear Sir/Madam

As a Registered Marriage Celebrant and a member of the Civil Celebrants; Graduate Association (Monash), which is a member of the Coalition of Celebrant Associations (CoCA), I write to convey my concerns about the amendments to the Australia Marriage Act 1961.

Marriage Amendment (Celebration Administration and Fees) Bill 2013 and the Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2013

In particular I agree with the position of CoCA in regards to the following points:

The Coalition of Celebrant Association Position on the above amendments:

1. I support the Amendment to **Australia Marriage Act 1961 Part IV Division 2 Sub-paragraph 42** to *add an Australian passport as evident of the date and place of birth of the party seeking to marry* as this removes discrimination against all Australian citizens, and especially as those persons born overseas are able to use overseas passports
2. I support the introduction of an **Application Fee for the processing of all new marriage celebrants.**
3. I oppose removal of 5 year reviews of life-time appointments
4. I oppose the introduction of a "Celebrant Registration Fee" unless this applies to all marriage celebrants.
5. I agree with CoCA which proposes a minimal staffing of the Marriage Law and Celebrant Section, making the maximum use of the advice and support of the peak body CoCA, celebrant associations and the State Registry Offices
6. I agree with CoCA which calls for implementing the recommendations of its comprehensive Submission on Cost Recovery & Increasing Professionalism. Those recommendations are aimed at a cost-effective and professionally enhancing system for the appointment and ongoing management of the Commonwealth Marriage Celebrant Program.

I also fully support the submission put forward by the Civil Celebrants Graduate Association (Monash) that has been submitted to the senate enquiry. In particular I agree with the CCGA's following points:

Civil Celebrants Graduate Association (Monash) Submission to Senate Enquiry:

Causes for satisfaction, as reflected in the above-named Bills, have been:

1. The introduction of a more stringent application process for people wishing to become celebrants.
2. The introduction of an Australian passport being added to the acceptable proof of the date and place of birth of marrying couples.

Causes for dissatisfaction in the Bills are:

1. The removal of celebrants' lifetime appointments to be substituted with annual appointments by means of an annual registration fee.
2. The proposed registration fee creates uncertainty as it is left open to an annual change in terms of re-registration.
3. The proposed registration fee is discriminatory
4. The removal of the ability to cap the number of appointments of marriage celebrants in a given year.
5. The failure to introduce terms for re-registration of celebrants which would acknowledge their qualifications, years of experience and compliance with celebrant obligations.

I hope the Senate will give strong consideration to the submissions of CoCA and CCGA who represent the views of Celebrants from across the nation in regard to the amendments.

Yours sincerely

Julie Weston, Celebrant