

Dawn Dickson

www.dawndickson.com.au

CIVIL MARRIAGE CELEBRANT

casey **celebrants**

ABN: 78 504 221 967

Secretary & Life Member of the
Assoc. Of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Vic Inc.
Member of "A" List of Women Celebrants of Melbourne

23rd April, 2013

The Committee Secretary
Senate Legal & Constitutional Affairs Committee,
P.O.Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: MARRIAGE AMENDMENT (CELEBRANT ADMINISTRATION & FEES) BILL 2013
AND THE MARRIAGE (CELEBRANT REGISTRATION CHARGE) BILL 2013

I was appointed in 1994 and in my 20 years as a marriage celebrant I have officiated at approximately 1500 marriage ceremonies. I am also the secretary and a life member of the Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Victoria Inc.

In my opinion the department has made a number of mistakes in not listening to the industry's suggestions about the quality of training and therefore over the past ten years or more thousands of celebrants were appointed after competing very basic and cheap training courses, many of which were advertised in local papers, attracting people to 'spend their weekend making lots of money at weddings'. As a result of this the department was inundated with applications from enthusiastic people, most of whom were appointed as celebrants, and many of them were unsuitable. This resulted in a lowering of standards and fees.

Since that time, with a flooded market, competent celebrants have been forced to lower their fees in order to retain work, and in some cases this has meant a lowering of standards. Many good celebrants simply can't compete - and very few celebrants who previously gained a living from celebrancy, can no longer expect that.

In my role as secretary of a large association I speak with celebrants most days. Many of them simply don't have an understanding of the rules, and no amount of training will help them, and some don't do enough weddings to remember what they did learn.

And the reason this has happened is because the department allowed people to be appointed who simply weren't suitable.

So now MLCS has decided to introduce a fee for Commonwealth registered celebrants.

Item 1

I oppose the introduction of a "Celebrant Registration Fee" unless this fee applies to ALL marriage celebrants.

We were given life-time appointments. Now it seems that we could be de-registered for failing to

pay the fee on time. The proposed fee of \$240 seems to me to be excessive given the fact that many celebrants would only be earning about \$2000 a year. The only celebrants who will be able to pay the fee, as well as association membership, insurance and OPD etc. are those who have a 'full time job'. Does the MLCS realise that most celebrants will only be officiating at less than 10 weddings a year and more realistically half of that?

I also ask why are Commonwealth registered celebrants being discriminated against. Why does this fee not apply to the other categories of celebrants?

I also oppose any suggestion that remote area celebrants be exempt from this fee. Remote area celebrants have a better chance of securing work than those in the cities where training colleges have flooded the market. In my own outer suburban area there are over 30 celebrants in the municipality. Most of the celebrants in my area would be performing less than 5 weddings a year.

Item 3

Subsections 39H (1) and (2) Performance reviews

I am totally against removing the 'five year reviews' of Commonwealth Registered Celebrants. A celebrant can book a wedding 18 months in advance, confident that they will still be registered at the time of the wedding. But if registrations are from one year to the next - there would be no continuity and this could lead to insecurity as far as the marrying couples are concerned. I, and my colleagues, have often discussed the '5 year reviews' and have been perplexed that the staff of MLCS complain that they are so far behind in those reviews. In our opinion, to check a celebrant's file, see that they've undertaken OPD from lists provided to the department, and that there are no complaints in their file, would be a 15 minute job for one person.

I totally oppose my lifetime appointment with a five yearly review being reduced to a year by year appointment.

I thank you for allowing this opportunity to submit my opinion.

Regards,

Dawn Dickson
Civil Celebrant