

To Whom It May Concern,

I am an authorized Marriage Celebrant and am concerned about the amendments that are proposed for the Marriage Bills. I would like respond to some of the proposals and have concerns about how the industry will change if they are brought in. Firstly, charging a fee for only Civil Marriage Celebrants is discriminating against us, why have one fee for one and none for the others. When celebrants are appointed we are appointed for 'life' unless we retire or die, so why is the fee proposed for every year? If it is deemed necessary for a fee, which I do not agree with, why not have a one off registration fee? Proposing that the fee will be \$240 this year but may go up to \$600 in due course is punishing the celebrants who are trying to do a community service while not making alot of money, if any at all. Why should the fee go up according to the Minister? Why should we have to pay now? Does the money include GST? How will we benefit from this fee? What would be different or better once we pay the fee? I am a member of other Associations and when paying a fee to be part of the group, you receive benefits, such as legal advice, discounts with associate members groups/organizations, networking opportunities, advice from experienced members in your field and many other things, what sort of benefits will I receive from this registration. What will it actually be for?

Also why would the senate propose that if the fee is not paid, it will lead to automatic de-registration. What if the celebrant is sick or in hospital, when the registration fee is due, you would not 'sack' anyone else under these circumstances, why do it to the celebrants. Clients will not be happy with last minute changes and why should they be. If you like a person and want them for your a service, you should have that person, not have them de-registered for whatever reason.

In my case, I average under five weddings a year. To have this fee tagged onto my expenses will make it virtually for me to get anyone to want me to do their ceremony. We are already outlaying money for insurance, copyright, travel expenses, clothing, equipment and stationary plus our time with interviews, rehearsals and then the ceremony. This fee is unnecessary and unwarranted! I believe that on average celebrants are marrying under ten couples a year, many, like myself, under five, as it is not a reliable income source for many, it should not be introduced into law.

What other hidden conditions may be placed on celebrants if the bill is passed? I feel that there are too many changes being rushed through, what is the rush. I know discussions are being held with Coco and some of them are welcomed, like the inclusion of the Australian Passport as identification, but most of the celebrants that I have spoken to are all united in their views, No fees, no registration that costs any money, no increasing charges with CPI and what do we get for our money. I would request that my submission be forwarded to the necessary persons. Yours truly Jennifer Tighe, Civil Marriage Celebrant.