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Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Attention Committee Secretary

Re: Amendments to the Marriage Bills.

I am responding to the proposed (Marriage Registration Charge) Bill 2013 Explanatory Memorandum circulated by the authority of the Attorney-General, The Hon Mark Dreyfus Q.C., M.P.

I received my appointment as a CMC over 4 years ago (A 09233). Prior to that, since 2004, I practiced as a full time General Celebrant specializing in indepth quality Celebration of Life Funerals & Memorial Services.

I wish to have it noted that I support the submission dated 25/4/2013 lodged by the Coalition of Celebrant Associations Inc (CoCA) to the Inquiry into the Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2013 and the Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2013."

The Civil Marriage Program was introduced in 1973 by the then Attorney General Lionel Murphy as a community service for the people of Australia and many Marriage Celebrants were appointed for life under section 39 of the Marriage Act. I have difficulty in understanding how this can be revoked.

There are considerable expenses involved when providing a high standard in all areas of our service including those as set out in the Marriage Act and I hope that the extent of these costs is fully understood by the advisors to the Attorney General. I am aware that much detail has been provided in other submissions.

Hence, I won't repeat in this correspondence apart from mentioning that even purchasing the relevant stationary from Can Print is a costly exercise for all of us plus insurances, equipment, travel costs and list goes on and on.

I strongly oppose any decision to increase the Fees and Service Annual Registration Fee over and above the already discussed \$240.00.

If deemed unavoidable by your department, then I believe the fee should include additional benefits ie the annual compulsory OPD at no extra charge and a Can Print stationary pack (50 Marriage Certificates/Envelopes).

To incorporate the above when setting a higher Registration Fee would be considered much fairer and certainly enhance tolerance of any increased charge.

We, marriage celebrants, work very hard to earn even a basic income from our profession and like many others, I wish to continue in this privileged role but can only do so, if realistically, the income can cover the expenses including any increased charge your department may require us to pay in the future.

Finally, I would like to register my outrage regarding your Paragraph 10 :- 'Remaining registered as a marriage celebrant'.

Under section 39 of the Act, duly appointed marriage celebrants were authorized/registered for life unless they were known to be involved in non professional actions as clearly outlined and in such case, understandably, they would be deregistered. Unfortunately, there are a large number of registered celebrants who lack professionalism and this is due to the relaxed capping system operated in previous years. They have no idea how to provide quality service and sadly, client couples do not know that their experience with a randomly chosen CMC will not be a good one, until it is too late.

It is a very costly affair to set up a home office with all inclusions purely for the purpose of having same available to interview clients, process legal documents etc and hold their paperwork securely under lock and key as required in the marriage act.

It is unthinkable that there can be such discrimination again Commonwealth registered celebrants as being considered at the moment and I make this submission in the hope that common sense will prevail and there will be no future annual registration fee of \$600.00 nor any change to the current life registration of a marriage celebrant.

Yours faithfully

Alanne McIlroy de Baladron
Authorized Marriage Celebrant