

Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

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

As a member of both the Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants and Australian Marriage Celebrants Inc. I wish to state that I **do not** wholly support the submissions made by them nor do I wholly support the submission by CoCA.

1. The proposed **Registration fees** are **discriminatory as they specifically target Commonwealth registered celebrants** and exclude celebrants regulated by states & territories and ministers of religion. The latter carry out the same duties as an individual Commonwealth registered celebrant yet do not incur the same business overheads, nor are they required to complete OPD. If a fee is to be imposed then **all celebrants** should be required to register.

2. While I do not disagree with **registration** in itself, I believe **annual** is too frequent. In view of the fact that the Notice of Intended Marriage is valid for 18 months and celebrants often take bookings well in advance of 12 months, a period of 2-5 years registration would seem more reasonable. This would allow continuity of service for couples who have booked with a celebrant as well as allowing celebrants adequate time to professionally manage bookings into the future.

3. **Amount of Registration Fee** - introductory fee of \$240 with a **ceiling of \$600** seems excessive. Teachers and Nurses pay much less for annual registration with a fine and suspension for non-payment. The amount of \$600 was not disclosed to celebrants until the Bill was made public.

4. **Immediate Deregistration** for non payment of fee is extreme to say the least and does not support the professional nature and ongoing training undertaken annually by the majority of Commonwealth registered celebrants. In the case of non payment of registration fee, **a fine and possible suspension** (with a reminder) may be more appropriate. There are already a number of methods in place, in which a celebrant can be disciplined.

5. It is not apparent how the 'cost recovery' implications of the Bill and 'the costs of administering the program' will be put into practice by MLCS in ensuring 'professional, knowledgeable and legally correct services are delivered'. Nor is there any indication of what 'new services' will be delivered. In fact, Under Subsections 39H(1) and (2), the requirement to conduct **performance reviews** every 5 years has been removed! This is to be replaced by a **reactive** review when 'there are grounds for concern about the conduct or professional standards of marriage celebrants'.

23 April 2013