

Dear Senator

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the Bill going before the Senate –

MARRIAGE AMENDMENT (CELEBRANT ADMINISTRATION AND FEES) BILL 2013.

I have been a registered celebrant since September 2005 and I was registered with an appointment for life. This bill will now convert my appointment to being that of an annual contractor. This seriously impacts all marrying couples. All clients choose carefully their celebrant and may book up to twelve to eighteen months in advance. Under the proposed bill they will no longer have the peace of mind and assurance that any celebrant they have chosen will be registered at the time of their wedding and they may have only seven days to find an appropriate replacement with no guarantee of doing so in our rural region.

Imposing a renewal fee will disadvantage the vast majority of celebrants who may not be doing huge numbers of weddings but prefer to give a quality service to clients rather than doubling up and rushing from one wedding to another. Since the cap on the number of celebrants was lifted the number of ceremonies performed by celebrants has decreased in accordance with the tripling of the number of celebrants in our region. This has resulted in my not making a profit each year but still being willing to continue to provide this service. An annual fee will mean that I now must pay even more for the privilege of providing a government service to my clients.

The 'additional conditions' that are not specified in relation to the annual registration process to date is not acceptable. The registered celebrants have been appointed to a specific role and now are being given no indication what will be required of us each year.

We are already highly competent and skilled performing a quality service to the general public. Under current law, Marriage Celebrant Section has the power and the responsibility to discipline celebrants for doing the wrong thing. Current powers include issuing a formal warning and have that warning put on our file; invoking fines; suspension or even deregistration, and when the matter is one that breaches the law a celebrant can also be put in prison. Marriage Celebrant Section has the power and the responsibility - written down very clearly in the Marriage Act. So any amendments seem to be vague and mainly about cost recovery not improvement of professionalism.

I appreciate your consideration in these matters

Kind Regards

*Ann Browne*

CIVIL MARRIAGE CELEBRANT