



Marriage Celebrant Matters

WINTER 2012

What's New in the Marriage Law and Celebrants Section

Welcome to the first edition of the Marriage Law and Celebrants Section (MLCS) newsletter, *Marriage Celebrant Matters*.

The newsletter contains information for all Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants. We aim to send a quarterly e-newsletter to update you about important news and events within the Marriage Celebrants Program.

We are pleased to announce that Susan Davis has returned from maternity leave and has taken on the role of Registrar of Marriage Celebrants. Susan was the Principal Legal Officer of the MLCS prior to the birth of her son in January 2011.

It has been a busy few months in MLCS with the release of the [Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for Marriage Celebrants](#). The Guidelines provide celebrants with up to date guidance on many aspects of the Marriage Act. The **ongoing reforms** to the Program are also exciting; a lot of work has been done to ensure celebrants receive the best possible service and regulation from the MLCS. We have also been busy with our move toward a **paperless office**. More than 10,000 celebrant files have been packed, tagged and scanned for addition into our new MarCel database. We aim to have every document accessible from our database, removing the need for paper files and allowing faster access to celebrant information. At the same time, we have commenced accepting applications to be registered as a celebrant electronically. This means no new paper files will be created, leaving trees in our forest rather than files in our basement!

In support of our move toward a paperless office, only the first edition of *Marriage Celebrant Matters* will be printed for those who have not supplied MLCS with a current email address. Subsequent editions of *Marriage Celebrant Matters* will be emailed, so please ensure that we have your current email address on file. *Marriage Celebrant Matters* will also be available on our website. The newsletter will use links to our website so if you are reading this in hardcopy, you will need to go to www.ag.gov.au/celebrants and follow the links from there.

We are eager to hear what you'd like included in future newsletters, including any stories you'd like to share. Please send feedback or stories to marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au.

We hope you enjoy the first edition of *Marriage Celebrant Matters*.

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Key Dates

24 September 2012 – Deadline for feedback on Program reforms.

3 October 2012 – Next CoCA meeting with AGD.

30 June 2013 - Deadline for fulfilling 2012 Ongoing Professional Development obligations.

1 July 2013 – Program reforms and relevant charges come into effect.

Reforms to the Marriage Celebrants Program

The proposed improvements to celebrants' services and regulation have now been costed. We thank those who provided feedback late last year about how the reforms could be implemented.

From 1 July 2013 there will be an **annual registration charge of \$240** and a **new application charge of \$600**. There will also be a charge of \$30 for processing applications for exemptions from the charges and OPD.

The proposed new charges will include:

- Improved technology, including an online portal accessible by celebrants.
- An annual registration certificate.
- A strengthened application process, including assessment of mock paperwork, phone interviews, and referee and police checks.

- Improved education and training including flexibility in undertaking Ongoing Professional Development, with new two hour compulsory units (two of the five hours) and attendance at association conferences OR completing the subjects offered by our OPD Panel recognised as elective subjects.
- Improved performance monitoring, including annual online performance review questionnaire and reporting tools.
- Increased engagement and access to MLCS including a telephone hotline for enquiries, an online portal to allow celebrants to monitor their details, improved website material for celebrants and marrying couples and quarterly newsletters.
- Greater engagement with stakeholders including CoCA, associations and state and territory BDMs.

The consultation paper which outlines the charges and proposed inclusions is on our [website](#). Have your say! To provide feedback on the proposed reforms, please email, write or fax us by **24 September 2012**.



New Resources for Marriage Celebrants

Our team has been working hard to develop new resources to guide celebrants in their work. CoCA has been engaged in the development of these documents.

The **Advertising Guidelines** are intended to guide celebrants about the information they use in their advertising material. For example, material that celebrants use when advertising should be accurate and ensure clients are aware of their terms. The advertising guidelines can be found on our [website](#).

You will also find the new **Conflict of Interest Guidelines** on our [website](#). The purpose of these Guidelines is to help potential and existing celebrants identify, disclose and avoid a potential conflict of interest or benefit to a business.

Ongoing Professional Development

Don't forget that all celebrants are legally required to undertake five hours of ongoing professional development each year, including any compulsory activity set by the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants. This includes Commonwealth-registered ministers of religion and 'inactive' celebrants.

With the Program reforms changing the registration year from a calendar year to a financial year from 1 July 2013, we are extending the deadline for completion of 2012 OPD to **30 June 2013**. This means you have an extra six months to meet this year's OPD obligations! More information about completing your 2012 OPD obligations can be found on our [website](#).



Outcome of the Last CoCA Meeting

The latest meeting between MLCS and CoCA was on 19 April 2012. Issues such as the reforms to the Program, education, and information for celebrants were discussed. A summary of this meeting can be found on the CoCA page of our [website](#).

The next CoCA meeting is scheduled for 3 October 2012 so talk to your association about any issues you'd like raised.

Throw out your Explanatory Material, the Guidelines are Here!

Release of the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for Marriage Celebrants.

On 2 May 2012 the *Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for Marriage Celebrants* officially replaced the *Explanatory Material on the Marriage Act 1961 for Marriage Celebrants* and the DVD, *When Words are not Enough: Some Legal Obligations of a Marriage Celebrant*.

This exciting release is a comprehensive guide to the solemnisation of marriages under the *Marriage Act 1961*. The Guidelines provide the best and most accurate information and should be consulted when resolving any queries. If you can't resolve your query after considering both the Guidelines and our website, feel free to email MLCS at marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au for assistance.

The Guidelines are freely available on our website at www.ag.gov.au/celebrants, or can be purchased in hardcopy from CanPrint Communications.

Update your Details

Please remember that all celebrants **must** inform the Registrar of any changes to their contact details, including phone numbers and email address. If your details are out of date on the Register of Marriage Celebrants, please send MLCS an email at marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au notifying us of that change. It is also important to notify us of the death of a celebrant. We understand this can be a trying time so either a family member or a celebrant association can notify us.

FAQ of the Month

Did you know?

TOP TIP

- **Is the Notice of Intended Marriage filled out correctly?**

Check to ensure important details of the bride and groom are in the corresponding sections of the NOIM and that you're using the correct form. Always make sure that you are meeting the notice period of one month from the date of marriage.

- **Can information on the marriage certificate be easily read?**

To accurately register a marriage, any handwritten information such as 'witness name' or 'location where the marriage took place' should to be written in a clear and understandable way.

- **Has the couple provided the right documents for proof of date and place of birth?**

To satisfy the proof of date and place of birth a celebrant must see an official birth certificate or extract of a birth certificate; a statutory declaration; or a passport issued by a government of an overseas country.

The *Guidelines* on our website provide helpful and practical guidance on correctly completing the NOIM, including what types of documents celebrants may accept as evidence from the couple.