

# Submission to the Attorney-General's Department

## *Ongoing Professional Development for Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants and Guidelines on Conflict of Interest and Benefit to Business for Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants DISCUSSION PAPER – NOVEMBER 2016*

**SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 5pm FRIDAY, 13 JANUARY 2017**

### Your details

<b>Name/organisation</b> <i>(if you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation, please provide the name of a contact person)</i>	Bernadette Riseborough
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- Microsoft Word
- Rich Text Format (RTF)
- txt format.

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## Your submission

### **Issue 1: OPD obligations that should be imposed on marriage celebrants**

#### *Number of OPD hours required for completion each year*

Five hours each year I feel is appropriate number of hours to adequately update and refresh skills regardless how long you have been an civil celebrant. I don't think it is excessive even if there are no substantial legal changes in that calendar year. As a fairly new celebrant upon attending my first OPD I was surprised to find some longer standing celebrants had forgotten some of the general procedures. I belong to a online discussion group solely for celebrants and some of the questions celebrants place there, I feel if they are confused, they should be addressing their questions to the AG not online to other celebrants who may give incorrect answers.

## **Issue 2: Timeframe for completing OPD activities**

### *Requirement to complete OPD in a calendar year*

Upon reading this I checked through my online portal to see if my OPD has been recognised for 2016, it still hasn't been updated. I don't have a problem with the current procedure but it may become confusing to align the OPD with the financial year ( July to June). If the OPD it is kept in the calendar year it will be more understandable to state the OPD was done in a particular year. I can see problems if it is aligned in a financial year where you would possibly be able do two in one calendar year and one in the latter of the next. My preference would be keep it the way it is.

## **Issue 3: Subject variety and availability**

OPD should only focus on marriage ceremonies only, to keep a high standard among celebrants. That is what I believe it was put in place for. Celebrant associations who have expressed interest in being able to hold workshops and have other networking events not in relation to marriage ceremonies should not be part of OPD. Yes, have them but not for OPD. It has no reference, its a different branch away from the relevant legal marriage ceremonies. Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages who have expressed an interest in holding their own training courses for celebrants is a good idea as that is the department who deal with the registry paper work but on the same token they would have to do the training through the AG to become a trainer to hold the workshop.

### *3.1 Guidelines for appropriate activities*

Approved mentoring would be good an idea especially the first year or two after becoming qualified as a marriage celebrant but separate from OPD. Any other training courses away from the control of AG may have consequences of standards being lowered and more than likely confusion on what courses are approved. Professional development programmes, any celebrant feels that would help them professionally is a personal choice and should not be part of OPD, again getting away from the reason of why OPD is in place. OPD needs to be concentrated only for marriage ceremonies.

### *3.2 Panel of training providers*

The current training providers as stated in *i)* seems the best option. The process appears to have a strong process of keeping up with service providers and quality. Trainers who attend the celebrant association conferences should be able to add this as their OPD.

#### **Issue 4: Exemptions from OPD**

##### *Exemption for first year of registration*

OPD for celebrants in their first year should be waived or given an option to attend if they feel it is needed. Newly registered marriage celebrants can broaden their network through a professional national celebrant association by membership which is advised during training. Very good support groups.

#### **Issue 5: Compliance monitoring**

##### *Self-assessment*

OPD trainers have the responsibility submitting to the AG when an marriage celebrant has completed their OPD. This system seems to work, YES? Once a celebrant has completed an OPD, maybe we are given the choice of uploading the certificate through the self service portal as a secondary confirmation to be viewed by the AG department then verified by the trainer for the AG that it was complied with. Is there a deadline for trainers to have all the OPD compliance activity submitted to the AG department in a calendar year? Wouldn't this be less work and easier method for compliance.

#### **Part B: Conflict of interest and benefit to business**

##### **Option 1: retain current policy on conflict of interest and benefit to business**

I would like to see option 1 kept in place so the celebrant can concentrate on the legal ceremony only to keep the standard high. Once you become too involved with other activities in a wedding it may cause unrest with the client if you have not delivered up to their standards either with the ceremony or ie djay, or wedding planning. How can you do extra activities whilst midway through a ceremony if you are needed as a wedding planner behind the scenes at the time of the ceremony??? With extra activities you may forget something in the ceremony as you have your mind on other items.