

# 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>	Claire Thompson
<b>Contact details</b> <i>(one or all of the following: postal address, email address or phone number)</i>	

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- Microsoft Word
- Rich Text Format (RTF)
- txt format.

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## Your submission

This discussion has comprehensively taken into account most of the concerns that Celebrants currently experience.

I think the P.D. delivered professionally is certainly the better option. There may be other options that meet requirements but many important items may be overlooked as they were prior to this system. I agree this could be burdensome to maintain but with a self reporting means it can then be supervised. This is open to conflict of interest in some areas. I certainly feel better assured that my P.D. is relevant, registered and efficient in the current method. Formerly, all sorts of "interests" were flagged as P.D. which did little for the professionalism and integrity of the program. Many folk may feel that they do not require the repetition of content, when in fact this is usually a timely reminder of correct practice. No celebrant knows it all. We all need to be reminded and updated. I am surprised that 1<sup>st</sup> year Celebrants would not want to take the opportunity of reinforcing their knowledge with the benefits of networking and discussion of "curly" topics and situations. They occur regularly and require discussion. In fact each year there is conflict between opinions of providers, especially with regard to BDM matters. I think it is indeed a good idea for BDM to have significant input. In past years a representative of BDM would sometimes visit regional areas which was most beneficial. The value of professional associations of Celebrants varies, with often little benefit other than socialising. It needs to be a professional association that provides up to date information and offers support to members.

It is certainly difficult to determine what is "conflict of Interest". The interest may not be registered but exists regardless. Venues have "arrangements" with certain celebrants especially "location based weddings" There is little anyone can do about this and it will continue

regardless of any impositions placed upon their operation. A good Celebrant has always offered any assistance they can without extra fee often going way beyond my role as a Celebrant. They want every wedding to have dignity and sometimes clients just have not considered the options available. They do not do favours for any organisation nor individuals.

Whilst Celebrants are in an ideal position to offer extra services, e.g. events organiser, wedding planner, M.C., photographer, florist, dress design, hairdressing, make-up, counselling and could probably do so professionally and efficiently, I fear for the validity of the Marriage Celebrancy program when one has so many fingers in so many pies, especially paying services.

However, this occurs now and will continue to do so. It is not always detrimental but once the flood gates open, where does the professionalism of our current delivery lie?

Many of our clients feel our role is the least important part of their wedding. They appreciate advice referral and assistance.

Most Celebrants have been offering "free" wedding planning advice since the program began. This has been done to improve the standing of the program and to make the ceremony "perfect".

There's been little gratitude for this input at times and now this service is now handed to charging "wedding planners".

I remain hopeful that the role Marriage Celebrant will remain just that. The solemnisation of marriages primarily. The other roles, e.g. funerals, namings, etc. are not the responsibility of the Attorney General nor Births, Deaths and Marriages.

We need to get weddings right! All the p.d and care taken to validate our role in this domain is essential