

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

Name/organisation <i>(if you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation, please provide the name of a contact person)</i>	Helen Scott
Contact details <i>(one or all of the following: postal address, email address or phone number)</i>	

Publication of submissions

In meeting the Australian Government's commitment to enhancing the accessibility of published material, the Attorney-General's Department will only publish submissions to this website that have been submitted electronically. The following formats are preferred:

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

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Would you prefer this submission to remain confidential? No

Your submission

Thank you for the opportunity to forward my suggestions regarding OPD.

When OPD began in 2003, there were opportunities to seek professional development from organisations other than the current four providers. Celebrants were able to submit their choice to the MCS in advance, to have the topic approved or not approved.

Over the past 13 years, some topics have become extremely basic and as each year has passed, it has become increasingly difficult for providers to create topics of value and interest to celebrants.

It has been observed by many celebrants, that the current face-to-face delivery is simply a requirement to attend. Some attendees have arrived late and left early, where others have taken their child to the OPD activity and have not participated in any way, and those who have read a book during the OPD activity.

Topics completed by distance require a questionnaire to be answered and returned to the provider. I believe topics completed in a face-to-face situation should have the same requirement.

Other issues relating to the delivery of OPD have been that there are not enough topics presented in regional or remote areas, and where they are offered, the topic has been of little interest or benefit. Those celebrants who wish to benefit from OPD have been forced to travel to other areas in an effort to gain a benefit from OPD. Some celebrants travel from the Hunter Valley to Sydney (a distance of approximately 300 kilometres return trip).

Following are my suggestions regarding the future of OPD. Most of my suggestions for the elective components would require many more than the current three hours, but would give celebrants much more scope to choose courses that the celebrant believes to be of benefit, rather than the necessity to choose from what others believe to be of benefit to them.

- I believe celebrants with over 10 years experience should be required to complete only the compulsory activity as set by the Marriage Celebrants Section, with no elective topics to be completed.

- Suggest celebrants be able to choose courses that will enhance their celebrancy practice e.g. MYOB, Quick Books, advanced Public Speaking skills, basic accountancy, website construction and maintenance, attendance at Family Relationship sessions etc.
- Suggest celebrants authorised before 2010 be able to choose a Unit of Competency from Certificate IV in Celebrancy as an elective, in particular "Work with Diverse People". This would be provided by a Registered Training organisation and the celebrant would receive a Statement of Attainment which would be acknowledged as contributing to completion of Certificate IV in Celebrancy.
- Suggest those appointed before 2010 be able to complete Certificate IV in Celebrancy and be relieved of OPD obligations for a period of 3 years, as was accepted in 2010.
- I am in contact with many celebrants with over 20 years experience, and they have stated that, after 13 years of OPD, they find little or no benefit in topics available to them in their area. They are aware of OPD provided by distance but prefer to treat the OPD as a day out with other celebrants, without expecting any benefit to their knowledge or celebrancy practice.

Thank you once again for this opportunity