



Marriage Celebrants Programme

April 2018

Complaints process

The Attorney-General's Department only deals with complaints relating to Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants, including religious marriage celebrants. These complaints are considered by the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants, an officer in the department.

We do not deal with complaints relating to [ministers of religion of a recognised denomination](#). If your complaint relates to a minister of religion of a recognised denomination, please direct your concerns to your [state or territory registry of births, deaths and marriages](#).

If you are unsure whether the celebrant is a Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrant, you should check the Register of Marriage Celebrants. The Register can be accessed at www.ag.gov.au/marriage.

The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants has no power to compel a celebrant to provide compensation or refunds. If you are seeking a refund, please visit the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) website at www.accc.gov.au/consumers, where you can use an online tool to identify the state or territory consumer affairs body that may be able to assist you with your consumer complaint.

What can I make a complaint about?

The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants can consider complaints about:

- a potential breach of the celebrant's legal obligations under the [Marriage Act 1961](#) or [Marriage Regulations 2017](#)
- a potential breach of the Code of Practice for marriage celebrants ([Schedule 2](#) of the Marriage Regulations 2017)
- a celebrant's entitlement to remain registered, including if they have an actual or potential conflict of interest or benefit to business (for more information see our [guidelines](#)).

What happens after I make a complaint?

1. **Acknowledge:** we acknowledge your complaint in writing.
2. **Assess:** your complaint is assessed by an action officer, who may contact you for more information. Based on this preliminary assessment, the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants will decide whether or not to proceed with the complaint. The Registrar might decide:
 - not to deal with the complaint, as the complaint lacks merit

- not to deal with the complaint, on the basis that the substance of complaint is more appropriately dealt with by another department. For example, the complaint might involve immigration matters, in which case we might refer the complaint to the Department of Home Affairs
- to deal with the complaint.

You will be advised of the outcome of this assessment.

3. **Investigate:** the action officer will contact the celebrant, seeking information and/or asking them to respond to the allegations of your complaint. A copy of your complaint and the preliminary assessment will be provided to the celebrant. Your contact details will not be provided to the celebrant.

After considering the celebrant's response (if any), the Registrar will decide what action should be taken.

4. **Respond:** the Registrar will inform the celebrant (and generally also you, the complainant) of the final outcome and the reasons for their decision. The celebrant will also be advised of any potential review processes.

What are the possible outcomes of making a complaint?

Where the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants determines that a complaint is well-founded, they may:

- make a recommendation about the celebrant's future conduct or actions
- take disciplinary action against the celebrant, such as:
 - issuing the celebrant with a written caution
 - requiring the celebrant to undertake professional development activities
 - suspending the celebrant's registration for a period of up to 6 months
 - deregistering the celebrant
 - if the marriage celebrant is identified as a religious marriage celebrant, remove the identification of the marriage celebrant as a religious marriage celebrant for a period of up to 6 months, or permanently.

The Registrar will generally only consider suspending or deregistering a marriage celebrant where there has been a serious or ongoing breach of the *Marriage Act 1961* or the Marriage Regulations 2017.

As stated above, the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants cannot compel a celebrant to provide compensation or a refund.

How do I make a complaint?

Before making a complaint, we suggest that you attempt to resolve the issue directly with the marriage celebrant. If you have attempted to do this and your complaint is about an issue outlined above, you can lodge a complaint by filling in a [complaints form](#) available on our website.

Can I make an anonymous complaint?

Yes. However, there are some complaints that we cannot assess and respond to if they are anonymous.

Contact details for the department:

Telephone: 1800 550 343

Email: marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au

Post: Registrar of Marriage Celebrants
Marriage Law and Celebrants Section
Attorney-General's Department
3-5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600