



Marriage Celebrant Matters



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Message from our team

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2019 edition of Marriage Celebrant Matters.

The MLCS met with celebrant association and network representatives on 28 October 2019. These meetings, held biannually, provide an opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues. Issues discussed included:

- Marriage Celebrants Program Review Survey
- ongoing professional development 2020, and
- the Regulatory Performance Framework.

Further detail on the meeting will be available shortly in the meeting minutes on the [Marriage celebrant associations and networks page](#) on the Attorney-General's Department's website.

The [marriage celebrants' self-service portal](#) is available from the department's website and allows marriage celebrants to:

- securely update their details
- pay the celebrant registration charge or if eligible, apply for an exemption from paying the charge
- apply for an exemption from ongoing professional development requirements
- view up to date OPD information, including activities completed in previous years and the OPD provider used, and
- resign as a marriage celebrant.

A new feature of the portal gives you access to add the OPD activities you have completed and upload your certificate of completion or other evidence of completion. A fact sheet '*Portal – Adding OPD activities & uploading evidence*' is available on the [Celebrant resources](#) page to assist you in uploading your OPD information.

Templates to help you prepare marriage certificates

Did you know that the department provides templates for the Form 15 Certificate of Marriage to assist marriage celebrants to print details of the marriage directly onto the Form 15 from CanPrint? You can find the updated templates in the [downloads section of the Marriage stationery and forms page](#) of our website.

Key dates

31 December 2019 – As the end of year is rapidly approaching, all celebrants should be aware of their obligation to complete five hours of OPD by 31 December, unless you have received an exemption. Applications for exemption from undertaking OPD can be made up until 31 December 2019 via the [self-service portal](#). However we encourage celebrants to apply sooner rather than later, as the OPD obligation remains if an exemption is not granted.

24 December 2019 to 1 January 2020 – The Department will be closed from COB 24 December 2019 and will reopen on 2 January 2020. Over this period please visit our [website](#), which provides a wealth of information to assist you.

Celebrants support Queensland's online marriage registration service

Article supplied by the Qld BDM

Queensland's Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has achieved its 10,000th online marriage registration just sixteen months after its new online service was rolled out across the sunshine state.

So far, almost 900 celebrants have signed up to use the Registry's online marriage registration system, which was developed to improve efficiencies by reducing paperwork and processing times for both celebrants and the Registry.

Principal Program Manager Tracey Rankin believes the system's success has been due to the overwhelming support from celebrants, who have provided continuous feedback to improve the system.

'Since the pilot in October 2017, we've been working with celebrants and the Associations to test and refine the online system,' said Tracey.

'We send out regular bulletins asking for feedback, and because our system is built and is managed within the Registry, we can tweak the system accordingly.'

Celebrants have been impressed with the simplicity of the new system, which sends automated email and SMS messages to confirm when applications have been received, as well as when a registration is completed.

'I absolutely love the ease of the online system,' said one celebrant. 'It is user-friendly and any 'bugs/hiccups' have been ironed out promptly.'

With 30% of registrations now coming through electronically, the system is also bridging the geographical divide, with celebrants as far away as Thursday Island signing up to use the online system.

'Queensland is a vast state,' said Tracey. 'We attended events as far north as Cairns and as far south as Tweed Heads to support celebrants to sign up.'

'The Associations have also been a tremendous help to us getting the word out about our system regionally.'

Celebrants registering marriages in Queensland who would like to use the online registration system can [sign up online](#) or contact bdmserviceprovider@qld.gov.au for more information.

WA BDM marriage team says ‘I Do’ to new roles

Article supplied by WA BDM

There has been a changing of the guard in the Marriage Services team at the WA Department of Justice’s Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Longstanding Registrar Brett Burns recently called it a day after 43 years at Justice, 11 of those in the top Registry job. Brett has been outstanding in his service to the community of Western Australia and we wish him all the best in his retirement.

Incoming Registrar Bob Taddeo is enjoying getting to grips with his new role while a number of long-serving staff members have moved on to other things.

Gavin Cotterell, who started in Government in 1975, retired after 43 years of service, and married more than 10,000 couples at the Registry. Jacqueline Eve has also retired after 10 years’ service and Elizabeth Gardiner has been promoted to another business area. Jacqueline and Elizabeth married over 5,000 couples between them.

The knowledge, experience and guidance of these team members has been invaluable and will be sorely missed.

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new look team:

- Robert Taddeo, incoming Registrar
- Cherena Thompson, Manager, Marriage Services
- Lance Davis, Team Supervisor, Marriage Services
- Mei Sutherland, Marriage Services Officer
- Jody Saxon, Marriage Services Officer
- Jade Laine, Marriage Services Lodgement Officer, and
- Lauren Minchin, Marriage Services Reception Officer.

We look forward to forging new relationships and strengthening our existing partnership with WA marriage celebrants and are always available for advice and assistance when required.

Celebrants and the online environment

The introduction of BDM online registration systems and marriage documents being provided by marrying couples via email, text message or fax has raised questions about how an authorised celebrant can continue to meet their record-keeping and related obligations under the *Marriage Act 1961* and Marriage Regulations 2017.

What documents can an authorised celebrant receive electronically?

- The Notice of Intended Marriage (Notice).
- Original supporting documents – passport (scanned original), birth certificate (scanned original), divorce certificates (scanned original or certified copy).
- A Commonwealth statutory declaration (scanned original signed in pen).

What documents can be signed electronically in the presence of an authorised celebrant or authorised witness?

- The Notice.
- Official certificates of marriage (civil and religious).
- Declaration of No Legal Impediment (DNLI).
- Certificate of Faithful Performance by an Interpreter (following the solemnisation of the marriage).

What can an authorised celebrant do via video conferencing?

- Sight evidence of identity.

What about record-keeping?

- Marriage celebrants can retain the second official certificate of marriage and Form 15 certificate record of use form electronically.
- Ministers of Religion may determine how their records are kept – electronically or hard copy.
- Hard copies of the Notice, DNLI or any supporting documents (divorce orders, parental consents etc) do not need to be kept once lodged electronically with the registry of births, deaths and marriages (BDM).
 - Celebrants may wish to retain these documents until the marriage is registered.
- Two official certificates of marriage must still be prepared – one for registration (with the DNLI on the reverse side) and one for the authorised celebrant (they may retain this copy electronically)

Once registered with the BDM, the authorised celebrant may dispose of the BDM copy.

A fact sheet '*Authorised Celebrant Obligations in an Online Environment*' and a quick reference guide can be found on the [Celebrant resources](#) page of our website.

Digital Drivers' Licences

Did you know that Digital Drivers' Licences are now available on smart phones in NSW? This is a digital version of the NSW Driver Licence on a plastic card. It can be viewed when there is no data coverage as long as the owner is logged in to the Service NSW app.

As a marriage celebrant you are able to use a digital driver's licence as evidence of identity in the same way as you currently use a driver's licence issued as a plastic card. The NSW Digital Driver Licence is legal for use across NSW and is accepted by NSW police, however, they are optional and not considered a replacement for the plastic card at this time.

In terms of establishing proof of identity as required under section 42 of the Marriage Act, parties to the marriage may produce photographic identification such as a driver's licence, on plastic card or digitally. If presented digitally, this may be by presenting the celebrant with their smart phone or if videoconferencing, they can hold it up to the camera for the celebrant to sight.

Ultimately, it is up to each celebrant to determine if they are satisfied as to the identity of the people seeking to marry. If you are not satisfied of a person's identity, you may request other evidence – either a plastic card driver's licence or other photographic identification.

A checklist for solemnising a marriage

Did you know our factsheet '[Celebrants obligations when solemnising marriages](#)' provides a helpful checklist for completing marriage documents, before, at and after the ceremony, to assist you in meeting your legislative obligations?

The MLCS recommends that celebrants confirm with the BDM first on the correct processes required by the BDM before registering a marriage. If you have any questions following the registration of a marriage, such as how to obtain an official marriage certificate or correcting mistakes on the marriage forms after they have been submitted, these also need to be directed to the relevant BDM.

The department's website provides contact information for each state and territory [registry of births, deaths and marriages](#).

Details required on the Register of marriage celebrants

The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants registers a person as a marriage celebrant by entering their name on the [register of marriage celebrants](#). The minimum details required to be entered are:

- your full name and title
- your suburb, town or locality; postcode; and state or territory
- the date of your registration
- whether you are a [religious marriage celebrant](#), and
- if you conduct religious ceremonies, the religious body or organisation under whose authority you do so.

You can check your entry on the [register of marriage celebrants](#) by entering your surname in the 'quick search' field. Maintaining up to date contact details is your responsibility under section 39G of the *Marriage Act 1961*.

Did you know that you can add to your information on the register via the [self-service portal](#)? Factsheets 'Accessing the marriage celebrants self-service portal' and 'Minimum and maximum details displayed on the register' are available on the [Celebrant resources](#) page of our website.

Passwords

You might have noticed that when you have logged into the self-service portal that you see a message that your password has expired. The existing password is set to expire after 42 days. We understand changing passwords so regularly can be frustrating for celebrants and we are working with our information technology colleagues to increase the duration of passwords for celebrants.

If you have forgotten your password, you may set a new password by using the 'Forgot your password?' function. See 'Resetting your password' in the '[Accessing the marriage celebrants self-service portal](#)' fact sheet for instructions. If you continue to experience problems you can contact us.

Questions

The MLCS is committed to improving communications with marriage celebrants and other stakeholders in streamlining processes and procedures. The MLCS welcomes feedback and comments via email at marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au.

If you have any questions about the information provided in this newsletter or have something you would like to see covered please contact us.

Contact us

Email us at marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au or contact us by phone on 1800 550 343 from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm (AEDT time). Messages outside these business hours will be recorded as a voicemail. We recommend that celebrants who have an urgent enquiry telephone the MLCS in the first instance.