

Process for Appointing New Marriage Celebrants

We as a group of churches have been approved by the Australian Government to perform marriages under the law. This allows us to nominate and register competent ministers to perform these duties across Australia. In approving and registering Marriage Celebrants we as a “denomination” are asked to ensure that our celebrants are appropriately prepared for this role. We see that there are three areas where we need to encourage competencies:

1. The Legal requirements for performing a Marriage
2. Pre-Marriage Counselling
3. Performing the Marriage Ceremony

Church Authority

CCCAust recognize, encourage and support the Autonomy of the local church and thus require the Church Elders to be an integral part of the recognition process of those in their church who act as Marriage Celebrants. We believe that the Marriage Celebrant will be acting under the Authority of the local Elders and thus the Eldership need to be part of the policy development that is incorporated by the Celebrants in marriages they perform. As such a Celebrants License will be tied to a local church (approving authority). If a Celebrant moves churches, the license will be revoked unless the Celebrant attends another CCCAust church where the Elders are willing to take responsibility for the Celebrants License.

Advice for Elders in Selecting Marriage Celebrants

In applying for a Marriage Celebrant License, we would ask the Eldership to consider the following guidelines to ascertain the suitability of the prospective applicant to be ratified as a Marriage Celebrant.

1. Communication:

The Celebrant should be able to perform the wedding service with dignity and sensitivity. Marriage ceremonies are a wonderful opportunity to share the Good News about Christ and the Celebrant should be able to effectively communicate these truths in these settings.

2. Counselling:

The celebrant should be able to provide wise counsel before and after the ceremony. Courses such as PREPARE (pre-marriage counselling program) and ENRICH (post marriage counselling program) or similar help train celebrants in these areas.

3. Marriage Policy:

It would be wise for the Elders to think through and provide clear guidance to their Celebrant on what practices they support. (i.e. What stance do you take if the couple is living together before the intended marriage? Will you marry someone who has been divorced? etc)

4. Legal Requirements:

The Celebrant needs to conform to the Governments legal requirements by filling in documents and submitting these on time to record the intent and act of marriage. Under the marriage act a person is entitled to registration as a Marriage Celebrant if

- a. The person is a minister of religion of a recognised denomination;
- b. The person is nominated for registration by that denomination; (the Local Church in our case)
- c. The person is ordinarily resident in Australia and
- d. The person has attained the age of 21 years.

5. Additional Considerations

- a) In the Governments Guidelines for appointment of Marriage Celebrants they will reject an applicant if
 - *there are already sufficient registered ministers of religion of the denomination to meet the needs of the locality in which the applicant resides*
 - *The applicant is unlikely to devote a substantial part of his or her time to the performance of functions generally performed by a minister of religion.*

To help assess the relevancy of these items, we would recommend that the State Entity should recognised Celebrants for a period of 10 years and then have the church review the appropriateness of the ongoing nomination. Re-appointment would need to be ratified by the State Entity based on the request of the Elders. Celebrants should be made aware of this policy. When reviewing this matter, we would ask the church Elders to consider the demand for the celebrant to ensure they are performing marriages at suitable intervals. Likewise, we need to ensure we conform to the Governments intentions and not support a disproportionate number of celebrants in our local churches. We look to the Church Elders to recognized and manage these requirements for their church.

- b) The Government has an expectation that Marriage Celebrants will keep themselves up to date and informed of changes to the law. We would suggest that the State Entities require that all Celebrants undergo 4hrs minimum a year of professional development.

The Appointment of the Celebrant

After consideration of the above and if the Church wishes to proceed, then an application should be submitted to the Nominating Authority in the appropriate State showing the applicants suitability to fulfil the above guidelines. (See Marriage Celebrant Application below). This application includes an assessment of the Applicants understanding and competence in the legal requirements, Pre-Marriage Counselling and ability to perform the marriage Ceremony. The Church Elders are also asked to confirm the suitability of the applicant as part of the application process. This application should be forwarded to the Nominating Authority as processed through the State Entity. The application should be assessed by a State based Committee who will assess the applicant and if appropriate recommend approval to the State Entity. Please note, the State entity is just processing the application for competency and confirming that the applicant conforms to the legal requirements of the Marriage Act. The Nominating Authority will then process the official paperwork to appoint the Celebrant.

Marriage Solemnization in CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES of AUSTRALIA (CCCAust)

All CCCAust marriage celebrants are representatives of our churches. As local church representatives CCCAust marriage celebrants must solemnize all marriages under the guidance of the church leadership as well as in accordance with the Australian Marriage Act and the CCCAust Marriage Rites detailed below. The CCCAust Marriage Rites represent the minimum requirements for solemnizing a marriage under the rites of the Christian Community Churches of Australia. Individual church elderships/leaderships may require celebrants to include additional elements.

CCCAUST MARRIAGE RITES

Where deemed necessary by the celebrant and the elders/leaders of the church the following is to be conducted prior to the wedding ceremony:

PRE-MARRIAGE EDUCATION:

The couple is to receive teaching on Christian Marriage and should receive appropriate counsel in subjects such as: interpersonal relationships, communication and conflict resolution, sexuality, family, and financial management.

The following are essential components for the wedding ceremony:

MARRIAGE EXPLANATION: An opening statement which explains the nature and purpose of Christian marriage. The Marriage explanation is to include the words:

“Marriage is the God ordained covenantal union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.” (Inclusion of the word ‘covenantal’ is strongly encouraged but optional.)

BIBLE READING: Suitably selected for each couple.

VOWS: Includes the following:

1. **Witnesses:** Commence with or include the words “In the presence of God and these witnesses...” or similar.
2. **Questions or Statements of Intent:** Include the words “Do you GROOM take BRIDE to be your lawful wedded wife” and “Do you BRIDE take GROOM to be your lawful wedded husband?” or “I call upon the persons here present to witness that I, GROOM, take you, BRIDE, to be my lawful wedded wife” and “I call upon the persons here present to witness that I, BRIDE, take you, GROOM, to be my lawful wedded husband.” or similar. From the above lawful or wedded may be omitted, but not both.
3. **Covenantal Promises:** The couple makes personal covenantal promises to each other. These promises may be tailored to include personal components. These should be vetted and guided by the Celebrant and must include aspects of commitment, love, and faithfulness to each other. Commence with or include “In the presence of God, family and friends, I promise...” or similar.

SYMBOLS/TOKENS: Usually rings are exchanged.

PRAYER for or **BLESSING** upon the couple.

DECLARATION: A declaration that the man and woman are married firstly according to God’s authority and secondly according to the laws of the Australian Commonwealth.

SIGNING: The official wedding documents are signed by the couple, two legal witnesses, and the authorised celebrant.

PRESENTATION: The couple is presented to the audience by name.

The inclusion of the following components in the wedding ceremony is strongly encouraged:

ENDORSEMENT: A public opportunity for the families to endorse, support and give their blessing to the marriage OR a call for possible objections as a way of confirming the legitimacy of the marriage.

TALK: A message based on the Bible to encourage the couple and the audience.

Application for Registration as Marriage Celebrant

To register as a Marriage Celebrant, we require you to complete the following tasks

1. Complete the Assessment task to show an understanding of the legal requirements for Registering a Marriage.
2. Show evidence that a pre-marriage counselling training course has been completed.
3. Complete the registration questions below
 - Section 1 to be completed by the Applicant
 - Section 2 to be completed by the Church Elders
4. Provide two sample wedding marriage procedures including an outline of the ceremony program identifying critical incidents throughout the process. This should include legal requirements and ceremony outline.
 - Case 1: A couple who have been raised in your church asked to be marriage in your church building.
 - Case 2: A Non-Christian couple approach you and would like to get marriage on a beach in Sydney.
5. Agree to undergo a minimum of 4 hours a year training and development to improve your skills as a marriage celebrant.

Please Note: This application process is not instantaneous. You will need to complete some training and go through the assessment process. We strongly recommend that you do not agree to marry anyone until you have your license in place. We have an obligation to process these applications in a proper manner.

Completed applications should be submitted to the State Nominating Authority.

Applicant Details and Declaration

Name: _____
(Please include middle name)

Address: _____
(Street Address)

Email: _____

Phone No: _____ Mob: _____

Birthday: _____

I am an Australian Resident YES NO

I am over 21 years Old YES NO

I have / will completed the following pre marriage training Course:

Course: _____ Date: _____

I agree to undertake a minimum of 4 hours professional development each year.

YES NO

I acknowledge my accountability to the local church Elders and attend the following church

Signature

Date

Legal Assessment Task

1. How long before a marriage must a *Notice of Intended Marriage* be lodged

- 1 Month before
- 1 Month after the ceremony
- Any time before the ceremony
- 7 days before

2. Is an Australian Passport an approved document to be sighted for the Notice of Intent

- Yes
- No

3. Is an Overseas Passport an approved document to be sighted for the Notice of Intent

- Yes
- No

4. When one or both of the couple have been previously married are you required to

- Sight an original of a death certificate of divorce degree
- Rely on a verbal assurance that this has happened
- Have the person in question sign a document stating that they are able to marry

5. During the Ceremony how many witnesses are required to sign the *Certificate of Marriage*

- Just the couple getting married
- One
- Two
- A number equal to the number of Groomsmen and Bridesmaids

6. When filling out the marriage paperwork which of the following is NOT an acceptable Occupation

- Retired Builder
- Student
- Unemployed
- (a dash)

7. How many hours of pre-marriage counselling is recommended for a couple

- 20 hours minimum
- 12 hours
- 0 hours
- It depends on the couple's situation

SECTION 1

Questionnaire for Marriage Celebrant Applicants

Please answer these questions in the space below, but feel free to add comments at the foot or on a separate sheet.

1. Why do you wish to be appointed as a marriage celebrant?

2. Why do you think you are suited to be appointed as a marriage celebrant?

3. Please outline your experience in leading public meetings.

4. What experience and training have you had in counselling people?

5. What do you understand your Church's marriage policy to be in relation to issues such as marrying couples who have lived together, those who are not members of the Church and those who have been divorced?

6. What areas of assistance do you think you will need in fulfilling the role of marriage celebrant?

SECTION 2

Questionnaire for Elders Commending Marriage Celebrant Applicants

Please answer these questions in the space below, but feel free to add comments at the foot or on a separate sheet.

1. Why do you wish to appoint this person as a marriage celebrant?

2. Why do you think the applicant is suited to be appointed as a marriage celebrant?

3. What public role does the applicant play in your Church?

4. What experience and training has the applicant had in counselling people?

5. Does the applicant understand your churches marriage policy to be in relation to issues such as marrying couples who have lived together, those who are not members of the Church and those who have been divorced?

6. What areas of assistance do you think the applicant will need in fulfilling the role of marriage celebrant?

We acknowledge that _____ attends our church and that the named meets the criteria to act as a marriage celebrant on behalf of our church. We acknowledge our responsibility in applying for this license and will inform the Nominating Authority if the named leaves the church or no longer is a suitable person to perform marriages on behalf of the church. We acknowledge and will ensure that the celebrant attends yearly training (4hrs minimum continued professional development) and we agree to review the celebrant's suitability and the need for them to maintain their license every 10 years.

CHURCH _____

Elder's Name: _____ Elder's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Elder's Name: _____ Elder's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____