



Coalition of Celebrant Associations (CoCA) Inc – 2019 Survey of Independent Celebrants Summary

An invitation to take part in the survey was sent to CoCA's mailing list of authorised marriage celebrants and others on the 19 February 2019. On the same date, an email was sent to all non-CoCA association's Management Committee's asking them to encourage their membership to participate.

Throughout the time the survey was open, CoCA association delegates encouraged their membership to participate.

The survey was closed on 31st March 2019.

1400 respondents clicked into the Survey. 1392 celebrants commenced and completed the survey.

A summary of the data collected in this period is below

Q1. Are you a Commonwealth authorised Marriage Celebrant?

- 5% of Respondents were Subdivision C marriage celebrants for religious organisations or with personal religious beliefs precluding them from marrying same gender couples.
- 93% of Respondents were Subdivision C civil marriage celebrants

Q2. Do you offer general ceremonies such as namings, renewals, anniversaries, birthdays?

- 90% offer ceremonies other than marriage ceremonies

Q3. Do you offer funerals, memorials or other loss related celebrancy services?

- 67% offer loss related ceremonies and services

Q4. What is your gender?

- 80% Respondents are female

Q5. What is your age?

- 85% are over the age of 50 years



Q6. Please note the state or territory of your residential address; and the type of area that best describes where you perform the majority of your ceremonies?

- 52% of Respondents reside in capital cities and suburbs
- 27% reside in regional cities and suburbs
- 19% in regional towns or villages
- 4% in rural/remote or off-shore islands.

Q7. When were you authorised as a Commonwealth Marriage Celebrant?

- 10% of Respondents were authorised prior to the introduction of training requirements.
- 89% were authorised in or after 2003

Of these:

- 45% authorised on the basis of one VET unit "Plan, conduct and review a Marriage Ceremony" CHCMCEL401A (now deleted from CHC02 Community Services Training Package 30/Nov/2008)
- 21% authorised on the basis of the previous Certificate IV in Celebrancy - CHC42608
- 23% authorised on the basis of the new Certificate IV in Celebrancy - CHC41015

Q8. In the last calendar year (Jan – Dec), approximately how many wedding ceremonies did you perform?

- 75% of independent marriage celebrant performed less than 20 marriage ceremonies, including 55% who performed less than 10 marriage ceremonies and 7% who performed no marriage ceremonies
- 17% between 20 and 50 marriage ceremonies
- 7% of independent marriage celebrant performed over 50 marriage ceremonies
- 3% over 75 marriage ceremonies and
- 1% performed over 100 marriage ceremonies in 2018

Notes:

Number of marriages in 2017 were 112,954 of which 78.0 per cent¹ were conducted by civil celebrants = 88104 marriages.

As there were 8486 celebrants in 2017², this means an average of 10.4 weddings per independent civil marriage celebrant per annum compared with 35 in 1999, and 64 in 1995.

There were 8562 civil marriage celebrants at December 2018³

Projections for 2018⁴ would be 94,000 marriages by 8562 means a ratio of 11 marriages per civil marriage celebrant pa.



Q9. In the last calendar year, approximately how many ceremonies other than weddings did you perform?

- 83% of independent marriage celebrants performed 10 or less ceremonies other than marriage in 2018
- 5% of independent marriage celebrants performed over 45 ceremonies other than marriage, of these only 1% performing over 100 ceremonies other than marriage in 2018.

Q10. For the majority of your ceremonies, what would be the approximate number of guests?

- 92% of ceremonies have more than 25 guests, including 8% of ceremonies that have more than 100 guests

Q11. Using a Registry Office fee for a comparable state or territory below as an approximate guide, what would be your average Saturday fee for the following styles of marriage ceremonies?

Current BDM Fees (State equivalent): NSW: \$533; VIC: \$490; QLD: \$588; SA: \$297; NT: \$300; WA: \$400. ACT and Tasmania do not provide marriage ceremonies.

- 61% of independent marriage celebrants charge about the same or less than a registry office marriage for a basic wedding
- 35% charge about the same or less than a registry office for a simple wedding, and 28% charge about the same or less than the registry office for a bespoke wedding ceremony.

Q12. Is celebrancy a major source of your income?

- 23% of independent marriage celebrants state that celebrancy is a major source of their income, even though 66% earned less than \$10,000 gross from their celebrancy work

Q13. If celebrancy is not a major income source, how would you describe your sources of income? You may choose more than one answer.

- 23% of independent marriage celebrants have full-time work in addition to their celebrancy work
- 29% work part-time to supplement their celebrancy income
- 43% rely on other resources/ retirement income

Q14. For the last calendar year, what would be your approximate GROSS income from celebrancy (i.e. Income before expenses and tax etc.)?

- 78% of Commonwealth marriage celebrants earned less than \$20,000 gross from their celebrancy work, including 66% who earned less than \$10,000 gross from their celebrancy work,
- Less than 2% earned a full-time wage equivalent from all their celebrancy work in 2018



Q15. Would you like more wedding and/or other ceremony work opportunities?

- 77% report they would like more weddings and/or other ceremony work

Q16. Please tick the 3 most common ways your wedding couples contact you.

- Email, referral from family and friends and referrals from previous clients are the major sources of referral for marriage work
- Phone, social media and celebrant's websites are secondary sources of referral for marriage work

Q17. Are you currently a financial member of a celebrant association?

- 74% of Respondents are members of a celebrant association

Q18. If YES, how many celebrant associations are you a current financial member of?

- 19% of Respondents are members of more than one celebrant association

Q19. If YES, given most professions require their professionals to be a member of a professional association, do you consider all marriage celebrants should be required to be a member of an approved celebrant association?

- 60% of Respondents considered membership of an approved celebrant association to be important for all independent marriage celebrants

Q20. Do you have cover for the following copyright and/ or insurance?

- 63% of marriage celebrants said they had professional indemnity and public liability insurance cover, and
- 54% reported having CAL Copyright Licence cover.

Note: - Apologies for the error on Q20. The question was reset and only figures reported are those where the question was working correctly. Sample size was only 760

Q21. Subdivision A Marriage celebrants (Ministers of Recognised Religions) and Subdivision B Marriage celebrants (State Officers) are not regulated in the same way as Subdivision C and D marriage Celebrants.

- 95% of Respondents think Subdivision A and B marriage celebrants need to have some basic training in marriage law
- 93% of Respondents think Subdivision A and B marriage celebrants need to be regulated by the Commonwealth Registrar
- 92% of Respondents think Subdivision A and B marriage celebrants need to do the annual compulsory OPD (when mandated for Commonwealth Marriage Celebrants)



- 86% of Respondents think Subdivision A and B marriage celebrants need to pay the annual \$240 registration fee

Q22. The Marriage Law and Celebrant Section (MLCS) of the Attorney-General's Department provides advice to Commonwealth marriage celebrants. In the last 12 months, how often and in what way have you had contact with the MLCS in relation to a wedding?

In relation to a wedding, the following percentage of marriage celebrants surveyed contacted the Marriage Law and Celebrant Section (MLCS) in relation to a wedding in 2018

- By phone - 30%
- By email - 32%
- By post - 4%
- And, 65% of marriage celebrants surveyed made no contact with the MLCS in relation to a wedding in 2018

Q23. If YES, please rank your experience with the MLCS regard to answer being delivered in a timely manner and whether the response was clear and helpful

With respect to the MLCS, the percentage of the Respondents' experience considered excellent to good, with respect to the following, was

- The answer being delivered in a timely manner - 46%
- The response was clear and helpful - 45%

Q24. With regard to the last Commonwealth marriage celebrant OPD you completed, how would you rank: Cost-effectiveness; Value of the OPD to you; The compulsory activity; The choice of OPD providers; The choice of topics; The information provided; The trainer's delivery (face-to-face); The style of learning (online); The learning experience (distance)?

With respect to the last OPD completed the percentage of Respondents who consider the following to be excellent to good was:

- The information provided - 62%
- The choice of OPD provider - 60%
- Cost-effectiveness - 57%
- The value of the OPD to the celebrant and the compulsory activity - 55%

With respect to OPD delivery, the percentage of Respondents who consider the following to be excellent to good:

- Face to Face - 62%
- Online and Distance OPD - 19% (average)



Q25. In 2017, The Marriage Law and Celebrant Section (MLCS) reviewed and re-defined its Policy with regard to Conflict of Interest. With respect to new Conflict of Interest Guidelines:

- 15% stated their celebrancy practice had been positively affected
- 5% stated their celebrancy practice had been negatively affected
- 8% had concerns about the New Policy with regard to Conflict of Interest
- 11% (148 respondents) made comments on this issue.

See comments on Question 25

Q26. In December 2017, Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017 was passed. By changing the definition of marriage, equality for all couples became a reality in Australia. Do you consider you need further professional development to better meet the needs of these couples?

- 8% of Respondents were unsure or considered they needed additional OPD in relation to the changes of the definition of marriage in Australia
- 19% (265 Respondents) made comments on this issue.

Q27. Commonwealth Marriage Celebrant Program is regulated by the Marriage Law and Celebrant Section (MLCS) of the Attorney-General's Department. Do you have any concerns, recommendations or comments to make about the Program itself or the Department's management of the Program?

- 16% said they had concerns, recommendations or comments on the Commonwealth Marriage Celebrant Program
- 19% (258 Respondents) made comments on the Commonwealth Marriage Celebrant Program.

References for Question 8:

1. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2017) 3310.0– Marriages and Divorces, Australia Attorney General's Website Find a marriage celebrant Marriage celebrants conducting civil ceremonies <https://marriage.ag.gov.au/marriagecelebrants/civil>
2. As above
3. THE ABS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA – A 2018 SNAPSHOT – preliminary findings showed “3,149 same-sex marriages that occurred in the first 6 months since changes were made to the MARRIAGE ACT 1961. Assuming the same rates for the remainder of 2018, this could mean
4. An additional 6,300 marriages for 2018 assuming the marriage rate for straight couples does not decline further.