



**Attorney-General  
Minister For Emergency Management**

MC13/07808

Mr Dally Messenger  
504 / 80 Lorimer Street  
DOCKLANDS VIC 3008

  
Dear Mr Messenger

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 2013 about the Marriage Celebrants Program.

I appreciate your concerns about the Marriage Celebrants Program and past decisions about its administration. Civil celebrants have played and continue to play an important role celebrating and commemorating many important occasions (including marriage ceremonies) for individuals, couples, families and the community as a whole.

The introduction of cost recovery is intended to assist my department to improve its regulation and improve the services it provides to Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants. The implementation of cost recovery has been significantly informed by extensive consultation with many individual celebrants, and through the regular meetings between my department and representatives of celebrants. These consultations have assisted my department to better design the approach to cost recovery, for example, by providing for a more robust assessment of aspiring marriage celebrants, including increased legal testing and interviews.

As you may be aware, the legislation to implement cost recovery for the Marriage Celebrants Program was passed by the House of Representatives on 18 June 2013. The Senate Committee for Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquired into the Bills and released its report on 19 June 2013. The Senate Committee report recommended that the Bills be passed. The legislation is currently before the Senate.

I am confident that the introduction of the celebrant registration charge will increase professionalism in the industry, which is clearly of concern to you and your colleagues.

In addition, there are other matters that can be addressed without the need to amend legislation. For example, I have directed my department to change the content and structure of its webpages that relate to celebrants, including improving the search function for how to find a celebrant.

Users of the website will now be taken to a 'Find a marriage celebrant' page which defaults to those performing civil ceremonies on the Register of Marriage Celebrants. This gives those civil marriage celebrants for which my department is responsible, the precedence they deserve on the department's webpage.

I am also aware that my department has been seeking the views of celebrants and their association on the best approach for ongoing professional development from 2014 and beyond. This approach includes a recommendation by celebrants that approved celebrant association conferences be counted as an elective activity.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me to express your views about the Program and upcoming changes. I trust that working together with the department, celebrants and their representatives will strengthen the role and reputation of celebrants performing civil ceremonies in our community.

Yours sincerely



---

**MARK DREYFUS QC MP**