

**CAN!**

The word "CAN!" is written in a large, bold, dark blue font. The letters are surrounded by several stylized virus particles. The viruses are red and spherical with small protrusions, and some have white teeth and a smiling mouth, giving them a personified appearance. The background is a light blue gradient.

Celebrants  
Australia  
Newsletter  
April - June 2020



Steve King



Celebrants Australia Inc.

## Table Of Contents

Page 2. The President's Address - Mario Anders

Page 4. BDM Cost increase - BDMVIC

Page 6. COVID and being a Celebrant - Wendy Haynes & Steve King

Page 10. How NOT the stream a wedding - Leslie Ridgeway & Steve King

Page 12. The Streaming Guide - Steve King

Page 18 Weddings and the Virus - Wendy Haynes

Page 25. Zoom and the OPD - Steve King

## The President's Address

It's been a start to the year that no one anticipated, and one that continues to challenge us all. We can all take inspiration from the way in which our industry is pulling together, supporting each other and finding ways to innovate and adapt. Some of you are changing and adapting your business models. A number of celebrants are taking the side of caution and others are picking up their slack. Some weddings ceremonies must go on and some are being postponed. Weddings celebrations can be held at a later time if a small four person wedding is held now. Funerals need to continue with only ten people and so there is an opportunity to change the way we think about grief and memorialisation and how we can help these families in the future when this is all over. Plan how you can play a part in supporting and rebuilding the wedding and funeral ceremony industry when this has passed.

But right now, the message is clear: everyone must stay home.

Consumer Affairs Victoria states that under Australian Consumer Law if a service cannot proceed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) consumers are entitled to a refund for any services not provided. Celebrants may deduct reasonable expenses they have already incurred from any refund and Celebrants should have clear refund policies and processes in place, to ensure they meet their obligation. And as always it is best to talk to your couples to negotiate alternative arrangements, such as holding the deposit over to be used at a different time.

Most celebrants are strongly encouraging people to postpone, not cancel their weddings and surveys are showing:

1. 26% of couples are postponing to later in 2020, most of these are coming from April and May, but also seeing August and September weddings postponing to later in 2020.
2. 26.5% are moving to 2021, these are still from April to December
3. 5.5% are cancelling altogether, most these are coming from April to June
4. 42% are holding their current date

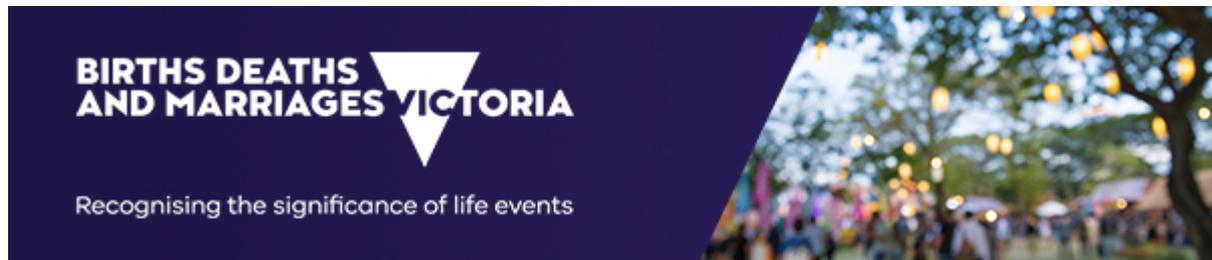
As it stands, I think we will likely lose between 27-32% of weddings in 2020 but gain a surge of weddings in 2021 of about 20-25%

These are unprecedented times. But we are all in this together and we all have a part to play to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and save lives.

Mario Anders

President - Celebrants Australia

I hope everyone has seen this email from BDMVIC, in case you have not, here is a re-print:-



Dear celebrant,

We are writing to you to announce an imminent change to the dispatch and delivery of all standard (legal) certificates.

These changes will ensure that important identity documents are delivered more quickly and securely to our shared customers.

From **Monday 23 March 2020**, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria (BDM) will only offer Express Post options for **legal documents**, including marriage certificates. Standard Post and Registered Post will no longer be offered for legal documents

Using Express Post will help our customers ensure that their privacy is protected, and that they are safeguarded from identity fraud

Express Post is trackable from dispatch to delivery. Delivery is guaranteed within 24-hours for metropolitan areas; 48-hours for non-metropolitan areas. This will significantly improve certificate delivery times

Standard Post will only be offered for commemorative and historical certificates only (non-legal identity documents)

Removing standard post for the delivery of this important legal document, aligns BDM with the practice of many other Australian Registries and other legal identity document issuers

The new fees, detailed below, cover postage and handling costs. BDM Victoria's certificate fee, including these new postage fees, remain the lowest in Australia

<b>Type</b>	<b>Cost (including postage and handling)</b>
<b>Express Post</b>	<b>\$41.40</b>
<b>International Express Post</b>	<b>\$54.10</b>

### **Financial hardship and fee waiver policy**

Victorians experiencing hardship can apply for BDM's Financial hardship and fee waiver

Learn more: [www.bdm.vic.gov.au/about-us/financial-hardship-and-fee-waiver](http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/about-us/financial-hardship-and-fee-waiver)

Victorians who are eligible to apply under this policy will also have the postage fees waived

Thank you for your continued engagement.

Warm regards,

**The Registry Team**

## **COVID and being a Celebrant - Wendy Haynes & Steve King**

As a celebrant and with the risk of passing on something to the bride, groom or members of their wedding celebration, we should not stand too close to any particular person in a confined space keep around 1.5 – 2m where possible and DON'T be in the same area for more than two hours. And these conditions are what is being quoted as increasing risk.

We should all carry personal indemnity and public liability insurance which would cover us if someone contracted something or was inconvenienced at a wedding which affected them financially as a result and was taking legal action against everyone including the celebrant, wedding planner, the venue and anyone else they can include.

Always have a backup plan and tell your couples that should anything happen to me include “If I become a confirmed coronavirus carrier” and it prevented me from continuing with the wedding that I’m a part of an organisation that has 70 plus members and would be able to get someone to step into my shoes at the last minute to conduct their ceremony.

Nobody is sure how long a carrier is infectious but people are considered to be most infectious while symptomatic, one of the problems is are we infectious when we are asymptomatic and showing no ill effects. The theory is once the symptoms clear we should then be able to perform our duties, however, there is evidence to suggest that you could catch a mutated strain and go through it all again.

The National Cabinet agreed that gatherings will be restricted to no more than 2 people except for members of your immediate household and for work or education. How will this effect celebrants?

The rules for weddings and funerals remain. No more than 5 people are allowed to attend a wedding - the 2 people getting married, a celebrant and 2 witnesses, which means NOBODY ELSE, no photographers, bridesmaids, overwhelmed mums, proud dads or screaming kids. If they want to be part of the wedding, read my piece on Live Streaming.

For funerals, no more than 10 people can attend, as per previous direction. On the Spot fines for people who fail to comply with directions are being enforced. If they organise or attend a wedding that has present more than two (2) persons being married, the celebrant, and 2 witnesses, or a funeral that has more than 10 persons, as prohibited by the Prohibited Gatherings Direction. The fine in this instance will be up to \$1652 for individuals and up to \$9913 for businesses who refuse or fail to comply with the Chief Health Officer directions, and YOU as a celebrant, are a business. So, in essence, if you are going to officiate at a wedding ceremony, the advice is to ensure that the couple understands the ruling, and you keep to the safe social distancing rules. It may be prudent to have something in writing that you send to your couple and they countersign that they agree with the direction.

What happens if the couple need an interpreter? There has been discussion on several Facebook groups asking if an Interpreter can also be a witness. Some people are adamant NO so find themselves in predicament -- others say YES -- and they are correct. There are a few 'buts' however under the present circumstances if any of you need to have an Interpreter -- then have them also as a Witness.

*Here is an extract from a newsletter sent out by BDMNSW and this will apply to any State as they refer to the Marriage Act.*

*For the health of the community in general it is crucial that you are aware of and following advice from State and Federal Governments. Current guidelines cap the number of people present at a marriage to five people. This includes the couple, both witnesses and the celebrant.*

*If an interpreter is required for any marriages, the interpreter can also act as a witness which will allow for the number of people present to be kept to five. Refer to section 5.9.1 on page 73 of the Guidelines on the Marriage Act for further details.*

#### *5.9.1 Witnesses to the marriage to also act as interpreter*

*The roles of the two witnesses are to observe that the marriage is duly solemnised and to sign the marriage certificates. The Marriage Act does not prohibit an interpreter and a witness being one and the same person, however, it is recommended that the professionalism of the interpreter is not compromised by a celebrant agreeing that the interpreter is also a witness to the marriage. Ultimately it is the celebrant who must determine whether an interpreter is desirable in order to ensure the marriage is validly solemnised.*

With the 5 person rule for weddings now, we all know how the marriage day should proceed; however with a 2 person rule in place for meetings, how do we get a NOIM signed and witnessed if we are unwilling to have people entering our home? Here is a novel approach and to be honest, I'm not sure that if the couple were stopped that the police would accept their reasons:-

*I have been speaking on the phone and having lots of emails between the couples. The last one I had send me their ID electronically, download and complete a NOIM and email that to me. I loaded the information on to BDM online system, printed the document, The couple drove to my house, I handed the forms( mostly covered in plastic) to them through the car window, I stood back 1.5 meters they signed it in my presence and then drove away. I signed it in the house when they left after disinfecting the plastic covers. It seemed to work reasonably well.*

Just for clarification, here is the official response from the Marriage Law and Celebrants Section of the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department:-

*The two person rule is a different restriction that applies to social gatherings and not weddings. I appreciate that your question relates to your initial meeting where you get the couple to sign the notice of intended marriage and not the wedding ceremony itself.*

*Unfortunately the department is unable to provide more information outside the minimum requirements of getting married under the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth).*

*Further questions on gatherings and social distancing requirements should be directed to State and Territory Governments who have responsibility for implementing and enforcing the COVID-19 measures. Access to current directions/orders in each State/Territory are set out below:*

They went on to list all the BDM's

**A few weeks ago a fellow celebrant ( Leslie Ridgeway) watched a streamed wedding.**

It seemed that a funeral celebrant (obviously a friend) conducted the ceremony which is fine.

**Reference was made to the authorised celebrant who lives in Queensland. They facebooked her on their mobile and she recited the Monitum through the phone and into the microphone. She was interstate - in Queensland.**

At the end of the ceremony, it was announced that the documents would now be signed. The streaming then ended.

One has to wonder who witnessed the Declaration prior to the Ceremony, and who witnessed the Official Certificates of Marriage and the couple's Certificate. The mind boggles.

So what does the law say about this? Are they even married? If so, in which state?

## *5.2 MARRIAGES TO BE SOLEMNISED BY AN AUTHORISED CELEBRANT*

*Section 41 of the Marriage Act provides that a marriage shall be solemnised 'by or in the presence of an authorised celebrant who is authorised to solemnise marriages at the place where the marriage takes place'.*

*Authorised celebrants, other than chaplains of the ADF and ADF marriage officers, may solemnise marriages anywhere in Australia.*

*Sometimes the parties to a marriage may request the involvement of people other than the celebrant in the marriage ceremony. This is a decision for couples and their families, in consultation with the celebrant.*

*Participation in the conduct of a marriage ceremony by someone other than a celebrant could include doing a special reading, reciting a prayer or a musical interlude or the participation of a visiting minister of religion. This sort of involvement is unlikely to raise any legal issues. In many instances the person who is not a celebrant wishes to perform the central role in the ceremony or nearly all of the duties of the celebrant at the request of the marrying couple. There are key points to remember if approached to be involved in these kinds of arrangements:*

- There is absolutely no obligation on the part of any authorised celebrant to participate in any arrangement for the conduct of a particular marriage with a person who is not authorised to solemnise marriages.*
- An authorised celebrant who consents to any such arrangement and to be present in the capacity of the authorised celebrant is legally deemed to have solemnised the marriage and will be the person legally responsible for all aspects of it. The legal responsibilities of the authorised celebrant in such ceremonies are the same as they would be for any other marriage ceremony.*
- The authorised celebrant's obligations remain the same when others take part in the ceremony. The authorised celebrant is legally responsible for the validity of the marriage.*
- The authorised celebrant must keep the record of the use of the Form 15 certificate and also the Marriage Register or second marriage certificate for six years (see Part 6.5 of these guidelines).*

So, married or not married?

OK, so I have to admit a vested interest here. Long before I became a celebrant, I ran Australia's most experienced video production house (dating back to 1977). Over the years my company has produced multi-awards winning programs, TV ads, corporate and training videos. Our broadcast partners are worldwide and include the BBC, PBS, SBS, RTE, the Nine Network and many Asian networks. We have created in-flight content for both Qantas and back in the day, Ansett Australia, and worked with small community groups creating video submissions from helping youth with disabilities to a new kid's park in Gembrook. No job is too big or too small.

So with that out of the way, I'm going to pass on some "trade secrets" that will assist anyone to make their streaming videos look better.

Let's take it back to basics. Almost 100 years ago a Scottish gentleman by the name of John Logie Baird pioneered what was to become television (yes that's why we have The Logie's).

As you can see, his video was not the best by today's standard made up of just 30 lines (today we have 4k which is 4000 lines) but the one interesting fact it that John's video was "portrait" aspect ratio, higher than it was wide.



Shuttle forward a few years and it became clear that portrait was limiting the full experience so things changed to a “landscape” aspect ratio (wider than its height) which presented a more natural look and felt “more real”.

So hint number ONE: Before you start recording or streaming using a tablet or a mobile phone, do this little modification, **turn your device on its side.**



If you're using a laptop webcam it's already the right way around. OK you say, but kids today seem to like portrait shots, or so it seems. Not quite true, it started with 1 to 1 video chat with apps like 'Facetime' where holding the phone upright was easier than twisting your hand and holding it on its side. As the phone was held close to the persons face, portrait mode worked well. But the moment you wanted to look at a wider scene, the whole shot lost its impact.

Hint number TWO: Don't shoot hand-held unless you really need to. There are lots of cheap small portable tripods that are designed to hold a mobile phone or a tablet. You could potentially pick something up for around \$20.00. If you're shooting with a laptop, try and elevate it so the screen is at face height. Nothing worse than "up the nose" shots.



Hint number THREE: You need to be heard, try not to rely on the built-in microphone on your tablet, phone or laptop. Having been in this industry for a long time, I have the advantage of owning some sophisticated radio mikes that work with my broadcast cameras that I use for streaming, but for those on a tighter budget, there are plenty of small external microphones that will plug into your computer, phone or your tablet at a reasonable cost.



**BOYA**

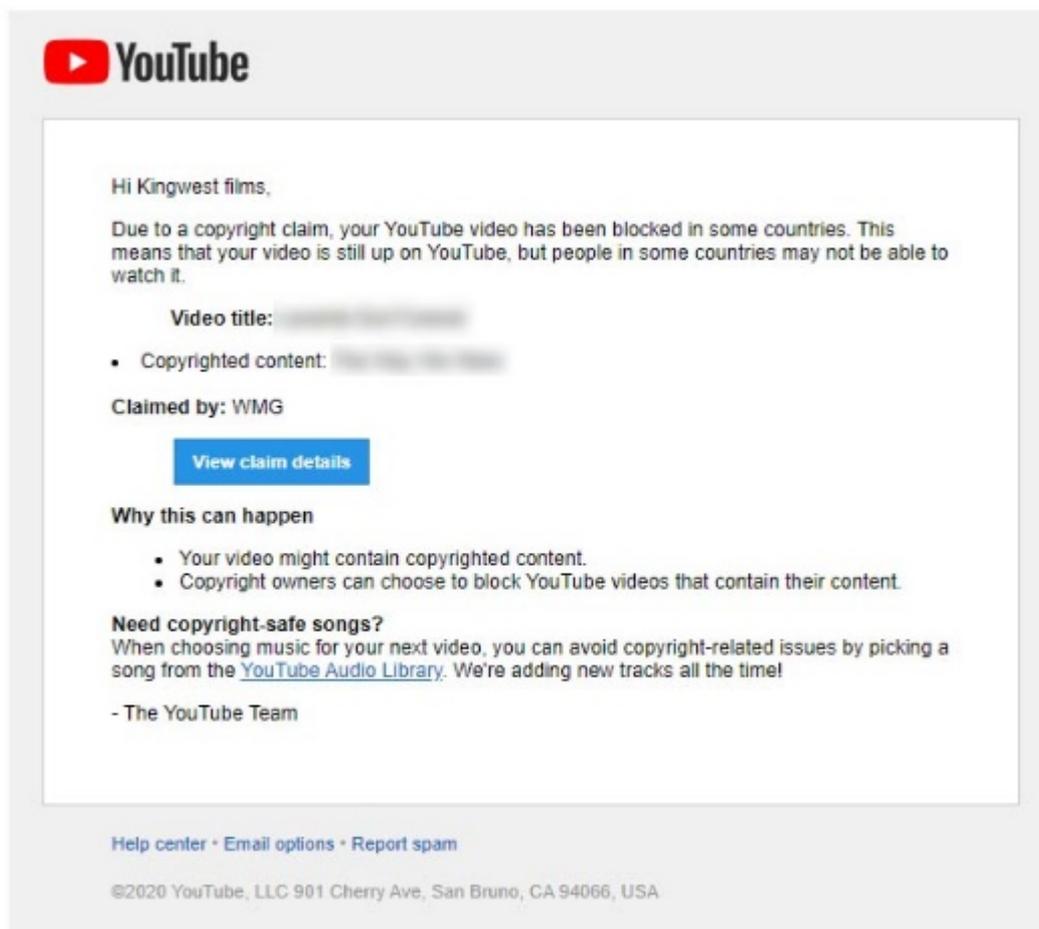


Hint number FOUR: Let there be light.... One optional but not necessarily critical piece of equipment is a small LED light. It doesn't just increase the illumination, but helps reduce the video noise which can add to artifacts and a bad stream. I call that the "clunky chunkies" and kinda ends up looking like John Logie Baird's picture.



Hint number FIVE: Pick your streaming platform. It could be anything from Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo or Dailymotion. It could be a free streaming platform or a paid service. It could be completely public so the whole world can see, or so private that you need a password. It's important to discuss this with your clients and set this up very early in the piece. All platforms require you to be registered and some don't allow you to activate for 24 hours. Again, being in the trade, I have my own streaming service, <https://www.emc.wedding/emc-streaming-channel> if you wish to see.

Hint number SIX: This is very important - if you used copyrighted music within the stream, you may be flagged for breach of copyright; and if you convert your stream into an upload, that flagged breach of copyright may end up blocking your video completely. If that happens, nobody gets to see it. The laws are there and streaming platforms enforce the rules by “listening” for any music you have playing, even if it’s in the background.



So there you have it, five relatively easy steps and a warning to enable you as a celebrant to live stream should you need to.

A week ago I was part of a training trial using Zoom to enhance a feeling of being there for funerals with Wendy Haynes. She wanted my input to help quantify the major differences between streaming a live funeral and using Zoom. More on that later.

However Wendy has written a very good blog which, in part, has been re-printed here.

Coronavirus and celebrancy

**How can we and our clients be affected if the government bans certain size gatherings? Weddings and Funerals/Memorials especially. What can we do to minimise the consequences?**

The pandemic of Coronavirus has already seen a big shift for celebrants worldwide with changes to their work practices, loss of financial income and a greater concern for the well-being of their own health and that of their clients, family and the wider community. Yet, the overall message is clear: take the necessary precautions to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, stay calm and stay connected in healthy ways.

The bans may mean that some couples may cancel or postpone their wedding. Now that there is a ban on the size of gatherings then there are likely that further guidelines might follow from government sources.

What follows are my reflections on the current guidelines in a celebrant work practice.

## **CANCELLATION OR POSTPONING A WEDDING**

If a couple postpones their wedding: When it comes time to rebook their ceremony they may be required to complete another NOIM if the current one has expired. Advise the couple in advance that one month's notice is still required on the new NOIM.

Payment of outstanding invoices and refunds of monies paid will be dependent upon your agreement that you have with the couple and also, your needs and values given the circumstances. This will not be the same for everyone. If you are not clear about what's important to you, then find someone you trust to talk with to discover what feels right before approaching the couple. Talking about money can be a difficult conversation at the best of times let alone under community crisis so do be prepared and clear with your communication.

Also, offer empathy and acknowledgment of possible disappointment, sadness, and frustration that may be present because of the cancellation or postponement. People will be challenged for many differing reasoning, from not having their dream wedding fulfilled, not having family and friends present, financial loss on bookings etc, some may also be very accepting – everyone is different. While being empathic, keep your sense of calm and also any necessary professional boundaries.

## **DOWNSIZING A CEREMONY**

If a couple downsizes their celebration it means that the ceremony involves just the couple, two witnesses, yourself and nobody else.

Ask clients, by email or by phone, if they have been overseas in the last two weeks and if so, was it a high-risk country they have come from. Have they been in self-isolation for the required two-week period? Ask if they have been in contact with anyone with the Coronavirus or are currently unwell. This is important information for you to how you will handle the booking. If you are at high risk – aged, have health especially respiratory conditions then you may need to consider what action you will take with regard to being their celebrant.

In the guidelines for The Marriage Act 1961 read the section mentioned below about transferring a NOIM. If you find yourself in a situation where you may need to transfer a NOIM, check the guidelines and, if need be, contact the Celebrants Program for advice on how to proceed. (NB see the email sent to all celebrants on 17 March) Keep safe, keep calm, be wise! Be upfront and vigilant about what precautions you will take if you proceed as the couple's celebrant.

Keep safe, keep calm, be wise!

Be upfront and vigilant about what precautions you will take if you proceed as the couple's celebrant.

## **TRANSFERRING THE NOIM**

Even without a pandemic, it's important to have the legal paperwork and the couple's information and ceremony details up-to-date and ready to hand over to another celebrant if this is required.

If you feel sick or show any of the symptoms listed in the current guidelines then contact your health care provider and follow the recommendations to not go to work! Self-isolation is key to pandemic control.

Instruct a friend or family member to know where you keep your ceremony diary, records etc and, if need be, they can support you to transition the paperwork to another celebrant.

Familiarise yourself with the guidelines and requirements for transferring the NOIM.

Go to the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961 for Authorised Celebrants and read Sections: 5.2.1 Availability of celebrant and 5.2.2 Transferring the NOIM in exceptional situations.

## **MEETINGS AT HOME**

- With the current situation it is not appropriate to meet at home.

## **MEETING ONLINE**

Many celebrants already conduct their pre-wedding meetings online using platforms such as Skype, Zoom, What's App etc. I have done this with overseas and interstate clients and find it more than satisfactory for both parties.

This may become more commonplace during the current health crisis. Familiarise yourself with the technology (or get the necessary training) before using it and invest in a good headset. Check that your background is appropriate for a work setting and that your environment is quiet, your phone is switched to silent and you won't be disturbed by other family members.

Have an outline of your meeting, the questions and necessary paperwork, pens etc in front of you. Also, have a drink of water on hand.

At the beginning of the meeting after you have greeted each other, check that they can hear you clearly. It's ok to spend a little bit of time making sure everyone is set up well. You may have to ask them to minimise any background noise such as a TV or to close a door if there are people talking in another room that you can hear. You may also need to talk slower and breathe more often during an online meeting.

Take notes and, if need be, you can email them an outline of what you covered in the meeting.

## **AT THE CEREMONY**

Again, the guidelines above plus:

- You can suggest the couple set up a 'livestream' of the ceremony. Request that they delegate a person to coordinate the setup and technical aspects.
- The couple may wish to acknowledge those family and friends who cannot come because of the Coronavirus; and their disappointment and challenge in going ahead with the smaller ceremony... and their joy.
- Tempted as you may be, there is good reason to **not** shake hands, hug or kiss the couple getting married! If you do accidentally shake hands remember to wash your hands thoroughly before touching your face or personal items i.e. your bag, phone etc.

## **FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL CEREMONIES**

You might wish to 'livestream' a small ceremony using the usual I.T. platforms.

Many funeral directors already offer livestreaming yet it comes to mind that a group gathering of friends and family with a 'ceremony structure', could also be held online. I have not done an online funeral ceremony, yet given the right sensitivity a ceremony held in this way could be engaging, touching and appropriate. I would be happy to support and work with someone if they take this option up. I have experience using the platform, Zoom and hosting sensitive international group meetings online successfully so I see the potential for this to work.

Remember, these are my reflections in response to a question and come from what I have read on government and health guidelines. I write this to share what I understand and to stimulate your interest and awareness - most importantly, do your own research, follow current health and government guidelines and keep calm.

Spread the love and stay connected in healthy ways!

Feel free to add to this list and if you find a mistake, a much-needed correction or addition to this article then I would be very happy to hear from you at: [info@wendyhaynes.com](mailto:info@wendyhaynes.com)

**For updated info on the Coronavirus:**

Link for the Australian Government updates:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

Link for The Australian Government updates on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/healthgovau>

Link for the Guidelines on the Marriage Act 1961

<https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Marriage/resources-for-marriage-celebrants/Documents/guidelines-marriage-act-1961-authorized-celebrants.pdf>

## **Zoom Zoom**

No this is NOT an ad for Mazda but a method of communication that seems to have united the world.

As I said earlier Wendy Haynes and I have conducted a training session on how best to use this platform.

One of the many ways of course is OPD's and here is a method of how it could work.

Almost as good as face-to-face training, a Zoom webinar involves you logging in to webinar software, and being trained by one or more trainers in the comfort of your home!

It's a two way system which means you will have the opportunity to ask questions, just like you do at face-to-face OPD, and you don't need to submit any assessment tasks. Turn up for the appropriate hours, answer some questions throughout the session, and your OPD obligation will be ticked off for another year.

Now I hear you ask, "Sitting in front of a computer for 5 hours?" Well needless to say any session would need to include breaks, let's face it staring at a computer screen for five hours in a row is no fun for everyone.

So for those of us who have never done the zoom thing, this is what's involved. You'll need a computer (it's better than a phone or tablet) with a speaker so you can hear the trainer, and you'll need an internet connection, but you do NOT need a video camera if you don't have one. A microphone (even the one built in to your computer) is essential if you want to interact with others.

Login details would be sent to you in the days before the session, and trainers should be there waiting for you in case anyone has problems. It's always best to be 10 to 15 minutes early to iron out any problems or having trouble connecting.

It's as easy as that.

The committee will keep everyone up to date with any OPD developments, but rest assured, there is very little chance of the OPD being cancelled as it's a legislative requirement that all registered celebrants must do.

Steve King.

### **A footnote from Judy Brooks about OPD**

The next stakeholders meeting with MLCS is scheduled for 5th May which I will be attending (phone conference) on behalf of CAI. OPD is on the agenda along with other matters that have been raised by associations, we do not have the final agenda yet.

I cannot see that OPD will be cancelled for this year as it's a legislative requirement that all registered celebrants must do. We all know and understand that work for celebrants has been effected by the Coronavirus and many will not earn any income this year.

# WOW

## Almost 30 pages long!

This is probably the longest newsletter in the history of the "CAN".

But there are a lot of things happening with the COVID-19 situation.

Everything in this issue as correct at one time or another during this pandemic, but as we now know, things change and it's up to YOU to keep yourself informed.

There are a few things that remain the same no matter what.

1. Wash your hands often.
2. Use a sanitizer after touching something that could carry a virus.
3. Don't touch your face (now that's a hard one!).
4. Cough into your elbow OR into a tissue and dispose of it carefully.
5. Stay away from people.

All of the above is basic info that everyone should know, so spread the word, not the virus.

Stay safe and well.

Steve