

Issue

Winter 2026

QUARTERLY
JOURNAL OF
CELEBRANTS
AUSTRALIA INC



Celebrants Australia Inc.

Inspiring ceremonies for life events

Next Member Function

AGM July 2026

CALENDAR

Member Meetings

July 28th 7pm (AGM)
Sept 8th 7pm (OPD)
Oct 13th 7pm
Nov 22nd
Christmas Party

Committee Meetings

June 9th 7pm
July 7th 7pm (Budget)
Aug 11th 7pm
Nov 10th 7pm
Dec 8th 7pm

Upcoming...

Prepare for winter by reversing your ceiling fans to clockwise to push warm air down, sealing draughts with door snakes, and layering with wool. Say the Mornington Peninsula Shire.



Highlights

Welcome to New Member P.3
Assisted Dying P.4
Funerals Preferred P.6
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The Funeral is over P.13
Survivor calls for change P. 15
What on earth is a VPN P.18
Top Scams in 2026 P.20

Welcome to the Winter edition of the CAN the newsletter for our members

Step into the world of Celebrants Australia Inc

Weddings in 2026 are evolving, moving away from conventional formulas toward a more intentional, curated experience.

It is a powerful shift that prioritizes self-expression, fostering genuine connection over merely “following the rules”.

From bespoke, story-driven ceremonies to intimate, immersive guest experiences and bold aesthetics, 2026 is defined by authenticity.

Our celebrants are shaping the year and showing how an independent celebrant can elevate weddings into a truly personal masterpiece.



Funeral Celebrants

We encourage more funeral celebrants to join Celebrants Australia.

We have many members who also perform funerals.

Membership also allows Funeral Celebrants to be included in our Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance.

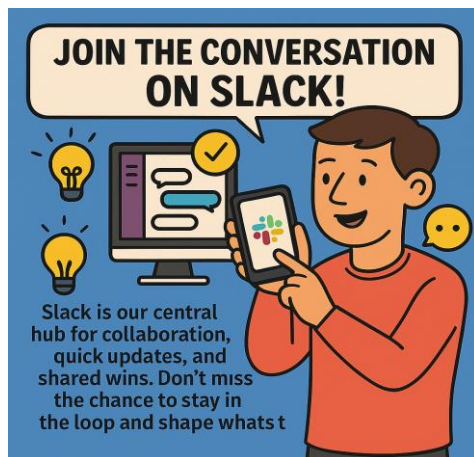
So tell all your funeral celebrant friends and colleagues about this magnificent offer.

Student Celebrants

We did not want student celebrants to miss out.

A student membership is half price (only \$50) and access to the member forum is included.

Of course insurance will not apply and no voting rights, but students will be offered upgrade to full membership upon registration.



Come join the conversation in our celebrant forum!

You can connect using the Slack app or simply jump in through your browser.

Great to see questions from our newer members on the forum. Every day is a new opportunity to learn and grow.



Using Slack

Celebrants Slack Forum is more than just our messaging app, it is our central hub for collaboration, quick updates, and shared wins.

By jumping into the conversation, you'll stay in the loop, get faster answers, and contribute to decisions as they happen.

Whether it is brainstorming ideas, sharing resources, or celebrating milestones, Slack keeps our momentum strong and our community connected.

Don't miss the chance to shape what's next — your voice belongs in the mix!



Instagram

Summary of What's Current in 2026

Feature	Trend
Reels	Fast-paced, talking-head, direct-to-camera, 7-15secs.
Carousels	7-10 slides, educational, save-worthy.
Stories	High interaction (polls/quizzes), daily updates.
Captions	Keyword-driven, conversational.
Goal	Community and Trust over-reach.

Membership Welcome

Our membership is increasing because of renewed effort by our committee.

You may have noticed an increase in new members, especially this quarter.

Firstly, the Membership manager is responsible for checking the Attorney General's website and we then email new registrants with an offer for membership to our association.

The committee feels that celebrants can benefit in many ways by being members of CAI.

Combined Liability Insurance (PI/PL)

Copyright Agency Licence (CAL)

Individual Profile on the Celebrants Australia website

Slack Forum for member connection and sharing

Member Access on our website for exclusive information on Celebrancy

Secondly, you may or may not be aware that Australian Marriage Celebrants - South Australia has decided to close its doors. The committee decided we would support their members in any way possible and Judy Brooks travelled to Adelaide to put an offer to each and every member to join Celebrants Australia Inc.

So far we have had 20 new members from that association.

Jane Bond

Phoebe Zhang

Reed Brown

Kerry Lee Sutton

Scott Bailey

Brian Tscharke

Chris McKenna

Thomas Allen

Liz Arnold

Sarah Twinn

Jenni Fraser

Emma Barnard

Jackie Amor

Dawn Law

Emma Wainwright

Karren-Lee Pearson

Richard Anderson

Derek Milligan

Shelley Allturner

Vicki Stokes

Pamela Heinrich

Desley Cooper

Angela Neary

Sandra Joy Carman

Karen Ann Bartlett

Dale Gathercole

Fiona Covassi

Lina Vescio

Patricia Lawton

Laura Andersen

Capt. Michael Smith

Janine Gilland

Vicki Fox

Kelly Keys

Kathleen Weeks

Paula Bennett-Brown

Moyang Chen

Anne-Maree Mulcaster

Glenda Perrott

Jessica Tirimacco

Tanya Emes

Are you missing out on potential wedding leads ?

Take a moment to review your profile on the CA website and ensure everything is up to date.

Is your region correct?
Is your email accurate?
Is your mobile number current?

Does your photo truly represent you?

When someone clicks on your image, is the detail about you still relevant?

Why this matters:

- Couples want to see the real you.
- Fresh images show you're active and staying relevant.
- It helps keep you memorable.
- Reusing the same photo repeatedly can feel stale.
- You don't want to surprise people when they meet you in person!

ARE YOU MISSING OUT ON POTENTIAL LEADS?



Voluntary Assisted Dying

Thank you, James Valentine. (ABC Sydney radio presenter)

Not just for your stellar career and gifts as a broadcaster. And not simply for your company and instinct for mischief, excellent though they were.

Thank you for doing the hard thing: being upfront about death and dying. And now, we learn, about voluntary assisted dying (VAD), still treated by many as the great taboo.

In 2024, James had already gifted his audience with his courage, not only by announcing that he had oesophageal cancer, but by bringing his doctors into the studio with him to discuss his cancer and how it might be treated.

Perhaps just as importantly, James did not shy away from expressing the many emotions coursing through him, not least fear.

For thousands of people facing the same fear, or worse, James modelled how to be alive while facing death.

Our discomfort with discussing death can stop what used to be normal conversations in their tracks. As if illness doesn't take away enough – our health, our energy, our future – sometimes it can damage what we cherish most.

I remember a woman whose husband, from the moment he was diagnosed with cancer until the moment he died, refused to talk about it. The frozen river of grief he left behind was palpable.

Now, in a final act of generosity, James' family has announced, on his instruction, that he took control of his life's end by choosing VAD.

More than that, they have shared with us what that choice, and the control it offered James, meant to them all. That he was able to have a living wake on Valentine's Day, surrounded by family and his dearest friends, so that farewells could be made. Knowing James, there would have been plenty of humour and good music.

That the Governor-General, Sam Mostyn, was able to bestow a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for James' services as a broadcaster and to the community on him last weekend. How brilliant that he could live to be so honoured.

Above all, that he could live fully until he could live no more. As his children put it, "the thing that sticks out in this period has been one of pure joy with him and love".

That James, his wife, Jo, and Roy and Ruby want this known means more than you might imagine.

Sydney Morning Herald, 23rd April 2026

Thanks to Grant Johnson for this article

Voluntary Assisted Dying (continued)

Even though VAD has been legal in Victoria for six years and NSW, now, for more than two, and even though more than 7000 Australians have taken this choice, it's very mention remains off-limits for many.

Families are afraid to raise it with doctors, lest they be judged for their choice or given the cold shoulder.

Some health institutions and aged-care facilities, many marching under the banner of "mercy", are openly hostile to VAD and clear in their intentions to discourage people from using it. Happy to receive taxpayers' money, it seems, but not their values.

This silence is even written into law, specifically a Commonwealth ban on the use of telehealth for VAD. Reinforcing the idea that VAD can't be spoken of, or if it is, only ever in hush-hush tones and face to face. The AMA recognises the harm this causes and, for two years now, have called on Attorney-General Michelle Rowland to amend the law. So far, that call has fallen on deaf ears.

At [Go Gentle Australia](#), we see how the silence and stigma that surrounds VAD plays out in people's lives – of an elderly woman choosing VAD put on suicide watch by her nursing home; of a palliative care service refusing to certify a mother's body because she had chosen VAD, then denying the daughter access to bereavement support; of elderly, dying people being smuggled out of faith-based facilities, away from their friends, on their last day alive, terrified they will be stopped by staff because they had chosen VAD.

A year ago, I joined James and clinical psychologist Dr Kerrie Noonan in a long and open discussion on an episode of his podcast he called "[Let's Talk About Death, Baby](#)".

At the end, I could see James getting emotional, and I asked him what he was feeling. Confessing he was on the verge of tears, he said "I'm taking a deep breath to calm, so I can't talk, not necessarily to squash it ... I'm probably just contemplating my own death".

Then the three of us hugged.

For his courage and openness, I wish I could hug him again today.

Andrew Denton is founding director of Go Gentle Australia

Thanks to Grant Johnson for this information

Reflections on my first wedding ceremony

I was so excited to receive my first call from someone asking me to be their celebrant. Previously I'd had a role in my niece's wedding, but this would be my first time to be solely responsible for legally marrying a couple.

Talk about hitting the ground running - to accommodate the couple's desire to be married "as soon as possible." My training kicked into gear as I explained the legal requirements and then agreed to meet the couple that night!

I set about ensuring I had my own paperwork in order to give them. I rehearsed in my head my list of things I needed to discuss with them, along with the legal requirements expected of me. I didn't want to make a mistake or look too much like a 'rookie.'

As I had always expected, hearing their love story was a highlight of our meeting. Seeing the love between them was fulfilling and hearing their separate answers to my 'consent questions' gave me a thrill that I knew I had chosen the right pathway to become a celebrant.

It was only just over a month to wait to perform their ceremony. A few hiccups along the way waiting for their written contribution to the ceremony, late payments and last-minute venue change didn't diminish my enthusiasm and excitement.

The ceremony went well and I remained calm when the legal vows needed to be broken down even further when the bride kept forgetting what she had to say. I wanted the ceremony to be as they wanted - warm, intimate and full of love based on their own spiritual vows. I was thrilled to read in their feedback that this was how they felt too. I loved writing my parts of the ceremony script and after lots of practicing to my dog at home, I feel I performed the ceremony without a major mishap. Practicing pronunciation of names was also a big help!

When I was back in my car after completing my role, it really hit me! *I have the authority to marry people!* Of course, I knew this was what I was doing, but after actually carrying it out, knowing my words and signature can turn two single people into a married couple - it's an incredible feeling. It was huge, and I couldn't drive away for a while. It didn't scare me though, just made me more eager to be a celebrant many, many more times.

Even though I was happy with how my first ceremony went, I can see areas I can improve in, and I have already modified some of my paperwork so that it works more efficiently.

Now that I've performed one wedding ceremony, I am so looking forward to many more experiences as a celebrant conducting weddings, funerals and many other significant life event ceremonies.



Liz Arnold Ferntree Gully VIC



As a celebrant, I prefer funerals to weddings. This is why. Jackie Bailey

Perhaps my work is still about my healing – remembering the sacred fragility, the passing nature, the end date in sight.

As a celebrant, I start my weddings and funerals with the same words: “Everyone, we are about to get started, so can you please make sure your phones are off or on silent.”

I introduce myself, express my great privilege in sharing this moment with the people gathered and always make sure I have tissues on hand. Wedding dresses don’t have pockets, and you’d be surprised how many people come to a funeral not expecting to cry.

From there the scripts change. At a wedding, I tell the love story of the couple – which is sort of like the prequel to the book they are now writing together. At funerals, I facilitate the family and friends as they tell the story of their person’s life through speeches, music, and slideshows.

In some ways, the narratives of funerals and weddings have similar purposes; both are rituals combining music, story and movement. A wedding represents the close of one chapter and the beginning of a new, hopefully joyous, exciting one for the couple and their community. The couple’s roles publicly shift, from betrothed to wedded, and their roles in their family and community subtly shift too.

Similarly, a funeral closes one chapter and starts another. The person who has died becomes a combination of past and present tense, and the people gathered begin to connect with the person differently through space and time. The people’s relationship with the person does not end but the manner of that relationship changes.

As rituals, weddings and funerals both incorporate physical movement; stand for the bride (or the casket), approach the casket (or the married couple), throw confetti (or leave flowers). People, through ritual, embed a new way of connecting with each other through their bodies.

Both weddings and funerals are sacred, special occasions and I am grateful to bear witness to both these moments in people’s lives. But I think I prefer funerals because the veil is thinner. People enter a space of holding something fragile in their hands, an oasis to feel comfortable with life’s ending.

I prefer Funerals to Weddings (continued)

It's unimaginable, dying. It is beyond the realm of knowing – until you are there. Buddhists practise meditative visualisations to get ready, to die consciously, as consciously as possible anyway, to enter the *bardo* realm with a goal in mind.

I was interviewing a local Wodi Wodi elder for the book I am writing about spirituality. I explained that I had begun conducting funerals [after my sister died](#) in 2015. I felt that my family and I had given my sister a meaningful send-off and I wanted to help other people do the same for their beloveds.

It turned out that on the day before our meeting, the elder had visited one of the funeral homes I work for. She had pre-arranged her own funeral. She showed me the box she kept in her living room, labelled "Departures". The box contained her instructions and song selections. I applauded her for being so organised.

The elder asked me, "Do you think that conducting funerals is part of your healing?"

No one had ever asked me that before.

"If it stops being healing," she said and clasped her hands together, "please, stop doing them."

At my sister's funeral, I had experienced an authentic return and wanted to offer that to other people, stewarding their engagement with the mystery of life and death. If one day I have nothing left to give, then I will not be able to offer the gift I had given to myself when my sister had died.

I have now decided I will no longer officiate weddings and will just focus on funerals. I love the joy and the vulnerability of a couple stating publicly what they love about each other and what they promise. But, as the elder I interviewed had suggested, perhaps my work is still about my own healing. I had thought I was doing funerals as a service to others but maybe it is also a service to myself, allowing myself to remember – every time – the sacred fragility, the passing nature, the end date in sight.

Maybe funerals help me live a little better.

Thanks to Grant Johnson for this article published in The Guardian 6th April 2026

Jackie Bailey is the author of The Eulogy, the winner of the 2023 NSW Premier's literary multicultural award. When not writing, she works as a funeral celebrant and pastoral care practitioner, helping families navigate death and dying

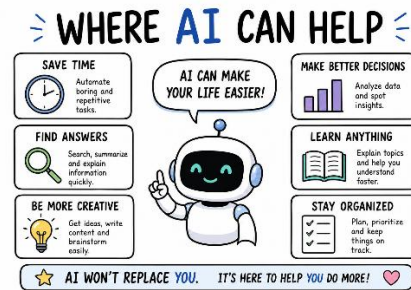
Where AI Can Help (Ethically and Effectively)

Used well, AI can become an assistant — not a substitute.

Drafting Support

AI can help:

- Brainstorm ceremony structure
- Generate alternative phrasing
- Create vow-writing prompts
- Draft initial outlines



The key word is draft. Your voice, your interpretation, your understanding of the couple must always shape the final result. AI should never replace your professional judgement — only enhance efficiency.

Administrative Automation

One of the biggest stress points for celebrants isn't the ceremony — it's the admin.

Technology can streamline:

- Inquiry response templates
- Automated booking confirmations
- Online questionnaires
- Calendar scheduling
- Invoice tracking

Less time on repetitive admin means more time on meaningful preparation.

Marketing & Visibility

AI and digital tools can support:

- Social media captions
- Blog outlines
- Website SEO optimisation
- Email marketing campaigns
- Analytics tracking

Again, the goal isn't to sound robotic — it's to reduce the friction that often stops celebrants from marketing consistently.

Where AI can help (continued)

The Ethical Responsibility

With increased access to AI comes responsibility.

As professionals, we must consider:

- Confidentiality of client information
- Originality of ceremony content
- Transparency in our processes
- Maintaining authenticity

Couples choose us because of our voice, our personality, our energy.

If a ceremony feels generic, templated, or disconnected, no amount of technology will fix that.

Professional integrity must always lead.

Technology as a Tool — Not a Crutch

The danger isn't AI.

The danger is over-reliance.

If technology begins to:

- Replace conversation
- Reduce personalisation
- Shorten client connection
- Standardise emotion

Then we've moved too far.

But if it:

- Saves time
- Improves systems
- Enhances creativity
- Supports organisation

Then it becomes an asset.

Where AI can help (continued)

The Opportunity for Celebrants Australia Inc.

As members of Celebrants Australia Inc., we are in a unique position.

We can:

- Educate one another on ethical AI use
- Share tools that improve efficiency
- Discuss best practice standards
- Support members who feel overwhelmed by rapid change

Technology is evolving quickly. Our response must be thoughtful, informed and collaborative. This is not about resisting innovation. It's about leading it responsibly.

The Future Is Still Human

At the end of the day, couples don't remember the software we used.

They remember:

- How we made them feel
- How safe they felt standing beside us
- How their story was told
- How the ceremony flowed

Technology may change how we prepare. It will never replace why we matter. Let's embrace innovation with confidence — while fiercely protecting the authenticity that defines our profession. Because in a world of increasing automation, human connection becomes even more valuable. And that is where celebrants will always shine.

Thanks to Frank Servello for this article



Welcome to our special series, staying safe online



Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) offers a powerful layer of protection for your digital accounts by requiring more than one method of verification. Instead of relying solely on a password—which can be guessed, stolen, or leaked—MFA combines something you know (like a password), something you have (like a phone or security token), and something you are (like a fingerprint or facial recognition). This makes it significantly harder for unauthorised users to gain access, even if they manage to compromise one factor.

The benefits of MFA are substantial. It dramatically reduces the risk of identity theft and data breaches, especially in environments where sensitive information is stored or accessed. By adding extra steps to the login process, MFA deters cybercriminals and helps organisations comply with security regulations.

For individuals, it means greater peace of mind knowing their personal data is better protected. Whether you're securing your email, banking apps, or workplace systems, MFA is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to boost your digital security.

Authenticator APP

An authenticator app is a key component of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), offering a secure and convenient way to verify your identity. Instead of relying on SMS codes—which can be intercepted—authenticator apps generate time-based one-time passwords (TOTPs) that refresh every 30 seconds. These apps, such as Microsoft Authenticator, Google Authenticator, or Authy, are installed on your smartphone and linked to your accounts during setup. When you log in, you enter your password and then the code from the app, adding a strong second layer of defence.

The benefits of using an authenticator app are substantial. It greatly reduces the risk of phishing and SIM-swapping attacks, since the codes are generated locally and not transmitted over networks. Authenticator apps also work offline, making them reliable even without mobile service. For organizations and individuals alike, they offer a balance of security and usability—protecting sensitive data without complicating the login process.

Source : The Internet

NOW THAT THE FUNERAL IS OVER

PRESENTATION BY
DORIS ZAGDANSKI

Grief isn't a neat series of stages—it's messy, unpredictable, and can feel endless because remembering a lost loved one never truly ends. Time alone won't "heal" grief; how you use your time—by acknowledging feelings and sharing them—shapes your coping. Most people try to fix or cheer you up rather than simply sit with you in your sadness, but the most helpful support is someone who listens without judgment or advice, and who lets you say even the "unsayable" parts like shame or guilt. Clear, caring check-ins after a funeral can make a big difference, since loneliness and awkwardness often follow bereavement.

Detailed Points

Messiness of Grief

- Grief doesn't follow tidy "stages" (denial, anger, bargaining, etc.).
- People often feel trapped in loops: "Where's the beginning? Where's the end?"
- Trying to impose structure on grief can increase frustration.

Time Versus Action

- Time itself doesn't heal grief; actions do.
- Ignoring or suppressing grief lets it linger and grow.
- Acknowledging feelings—especially around anniversaries—prevents grief from "hiding" and resurging.

Finding Support, Not Fixers

- The simplest—but not easy—solution is finding someone safe to share with.
- Ideal confidants won't judge, advise, or try to cheer you up.
- Most people want to "fix" your grief by:
 - Offering advice ("You need another baby")
 - Pushing positivity ("Remember the happy times")
 - Telling their own stories instead of listening

Pitfalls of Common Responses

- Telling someone to "snap out of it" invalidates their pain.
- Redirecting to happy memories can block true emotional expression.
- Sharing unrelated stories or comparisons undermines focus on the mourner's feelings.

I, Me, and My Focus

- In grief, you can only manage your own feelings and responsibilities.
- It's hard to care for others (e.g., children, spouse) when you're overwhelmed.

NOW THAT THE FUNERAL IS OVER (continued)

Personal Experience: Losing Claire

- Daughter Claire died of cot death at two months old in 1980.
- Working in a funeral home helped the speaker “remember” rather than forget.
- Daily remembrance illustrates that grief endures.

Caring for a Surviving Child

- The speaker also had a three-year-old daughter, Kate, asking “Where is my baby?”
- Answering hard questions while barely coping yourself is extremely challenging.
- You need another caring adult to help you sit alongside that grief.

Shame, Guilt, and the Unsayable

- Parents often feel shame for not protecting their child, even if it’s irrational.
- Guilt, blame, and shame are rarely shared because they feel taboo.
- Unspoken grief festers internally if there’s no place to express it.

Encouraging Honest Expression

- Invite grieving people to share their darkest thoughts (anger, blame, “I hate God”).
- You don’t need solutions—just presence and willingness to listen.
- Sharing painful feelings prevents them from being locked away.

How to Reach Out Properly

- Instead of “Hi, how are you?” try: “I haven’t seen you since your dad’s funeral. How are things on the home front?”
- Be explicit that you want an honest update on their grief.
- Simply turning up—without agenda—is itself a meaningful gesture.

Lasting Challenges

- After funerals, support networks thin out quickly.
- Grieving people often experience loneliness because friends fear saying the wrong thing.
- Acknowledgment of the loss, not avoidance, provides real comfort.

Final Conclusions

- Grief is messy and has no fixed timeline; eternal remembrance is normal.
- Time doesn’t heal—active processing and sharing do.
- Seek listeners who allow unfiltered expression rather than “fix” you.
- Acknowledge the mourner’s pain, avoiding the subject hurts more than bringing it up.
- Simple, explicit check-ins and just “showing up” sustain someone long after the funeral.

Thank you to Judy Brooks who attended the expo and came away impressed with the presentation.

NOTE: Doris Zagdanski is well known as a writer, trainer and educator on the topic of grief. She communicates in a down to earth style and speaks from the heart. Whilst her professional career is currently in the funeral industry; she is a regular guest speaker and presenter to those who work with grieving people.

Australian Federal Police see growth in reports of forced marriage, survivor calls for change

Original ABC report https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-05/rise-in-forced-marriage-in-australia-survivor-calls-for-change/106349560?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=mail&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web

The article highlights a significant rise in reports of forced marriage across Australia and centres on the lived experience of “Sara,” a survivor who was forced into marriage at age 11 overseas. Now living in Australia, she advocates for stronger protections, better education, and more effective government responses. The piece also outlines concerns from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner about the growing prevalence of forced marriage, particularly involving school-aged children.

Sara’s Story: From Child Marriage to Advocate

- Sara was “promised” into a forced marriage at **age 11**.
- Despite the constraints of her marriage, she pursued education relentlessly, completing a **double degree and a master’s degree**.
- She eventually divorced in **2019** and rebuilt her life in Australia.
- Motivated by her experience, she now works to raise awareness of forced marriage, especially within migrant communities where the practice may not be recognised as a crime.
- In **2023**, she founded **Boland Parwaz**, an organisation dedicated to ending forced marriage and supporting survivors.
- She is developing an **app** to assist victim-survivors and has served as a lived-experience consultant for NSW government bodies.

[abc.net.au](https://www.abc.net.au)

Rising Reports of Forced Marriage

- Forced marriage is defined as a marriage where a person **cannot freely and fully consent**, due to coercion, threats, deception, age, or incapacity.
- The legal marriage age in Australia is **18**.
- Reports to the AFP-led **Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE)** increased by **almost 30%** in one year:
 - **91 cases** in 2023–24
 - **118 cases** in 2024–25
- A notable case in **2024** saw a NSW man jailed for attempting to arrange forced marriages for his **15- and 17-year-old** children.

Growth in reports of forced marriage (continued)

Schools as Frontline Protectors

AFP Commander Helen Schneider stresses that schools are critical in identifying at-risk children because victims are often school-aged. Warning signs include:

- Limited independence or privacy
- Constant monitoring by family
- Anxiety about overseas travel
- Sudden changes in home circumstances

Sara believes that if her teachers had recognised the signs, her own experience might have been prevented.

Modern Slavery in NSW: Systemic Gaps

NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner **Dr James Cockayne** reports that:

- Forced marriage is the **most reported form of modern slavery** in NSW.
- It remains prevalent across diverse cultural and religious contexts.
- Some cases involve girls being **trafficked out of Australia** for underage marriages overseas.
- Government systems—particularly within the **Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)**—are **not yet meeting expectations** for supporting victims, including providing safe accommodation.
- DCJ acknowledges the gaps and says it is working to improve recognition and assistance. abc.net.au

Support Services & Current Responses

Available support includes:

- AFP human trafficking reporting channels
- NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner hotline
- Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program
- My Blue Sky (legal and support service)
- Specialist Homelessness Services and Victim Services (counselling, financial assistance, recognition payments).

However, the article suggests that **coordination and frontline training remain insufficient**, especially in schools and community-facing agencies.

Growth in reports of forced marriage (continued)

Key Themes & Implications

1. Forced marriage is increasing and under-recognised.

Many families and communities may not understand that the practice is illegal in Australia.

2. Schools need better training and awareness.

Educators are often the first adults outside the family to notice warning signs.

3. Government systems are lagging behind.

Despite legislation, practical support—especially safe accommodation—remains inconsistent.

4. Survivor voices are driving change.

Sara's advocacy demonstrates the importance of lived experience in shaping policy and community education.

Summary

The article paints a picture of a growing, complex form of modern slavery in Australia. While awareness and reporting are increasing, systemic gaps persist. Survivors like Sara are pushing for stronger protections, better education, and more coordinated government action to ensure that no child or adult is forced into marriage—and that those who are can, find safety and support.

And Thanks to Judy Brooks for locating and providing this article.



What Is a VPN? And Why It Matters for Your Online Privacy



From checking your bank account to connecting on public Wi-Fi, much of your daily life now happens online. But every time you go online, your personal information, location, and browsing activity can be exposed to tracking, data collection, or cyber threats.

As concerns around privacy and online security continue to grow, more people are turning to virtual private networks (VPNs) to help protect their connection and keep their digital lives more secure

What is a VPN?

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) creates a secure, encrypted connection between your device and the internet. Instead of your data travelling directly from your device to a website or service, a VPN routes your connection through a protected server.

This process:

Encrypts your internet traffic so others can't read it

Hides your real IP address

Helps keep your online activity private

Think of a VPN as a secure tunnel for your data, protecting your information as it moves across the internet.

When should you use a VPN?

A VPN is especially useful when:

Connecting to public or shared Wi-Fi

Accessing banking, email, or work accounts on the go

Travelling internationally

Working remotely

Using devices outside your home network

What Is a VPN? And Why It Matters for Your Online Privacy (continued)

Key benefits of using a VPN

Protect sensitive information on public Wi-Fi

Public Wi-Fi networks in cafes, airports, and hotels are convenient, but they're also a common target for cybercriminals. A VPN encrypts your connection, helping prevent hackers from intercepting passwords, financial details, emails, and other personal data.

Keep your online activity private

A VPN hides your IP address and encrypts your traffic, making it much harder for third parties, including advertisers, websites, or internet providers to track your activity or monitor your location.

Reduce your exposure to cyber threats

By encrypting your internet traffic, a VPN adds a critical layer of protection that helps reduce the risk of identity theft, account compromise, and data breaches.

Browse, bank and shop with greater confidence

From online banking to everyday purchases, a VPN helps safeguard your personal and financial information, giving you added peace of mind when managing your digital life.

Support your online privacy

Using a VPN helps keep your browsing private and your personal data more secure, especially on public or unsecured Wi-Fi. Trend Micro Security Suite Pro Plus includes a VPN app that works alongside your security software as part of a layered approach to online protection.

Source: Trend Micro

The Top Scams Hitting People in 2026 — Plus a New Scam Emerging



Imagine seeing a huge online sale from a brand you recognise, receiving a message from a government agency, or getting a notification through a workplace platform like Microsoft Teams. Each of these situations feels normal, which is exactly why scammers are increasingly using them to target victims.

Today's scams are designed to blend into everyday digital life. By impersonating trusted organisations, copying legitimate websites, or exploiting workplace tools, criminals are finding new ways to trick people into handing over money or sensitive information. Here are some of the most common scams circulating right now.

Online Shopping Scams

Online shopping scams use fake online stores designed to look like legitimate retailers. These sites often promote popular products, like clothing, electronics, or fan merchandise at massive discounts to lure people into making a quick purchase.

The websites may copy the branding and layout of well-known brands, making them appear convincing at first glance. But once payment is made, the product never arrives, or a cheap counterfeit item is sent instead. In many cases, the real goal is to capture payment details and personal information.

Common red flags include:

- Prices that seem too good to be true
- Website URLs that look slightly different from the real brand
- Limited contact information or missing return policies
- Poor spelling, grammar, or low-quality images
-

Business Impersonation Scams

A business impersonation scam happens when criminals pretend to be a trusted organisation to trick people into handing over money or sensitive information. These scams often involve organisations people recognise and rely on, such as banks, government agencies, delivery companies, or major brands. Below are two examples currently circulating in Australia.

Australian Federal Police (AFP)

Scammers are pretending they work for the AFP and other law-enforcement agencies to deceive victims into sending them funds from their cryptocurrency accounts, or to share seed phrases, a list of random words used to help recover your account.

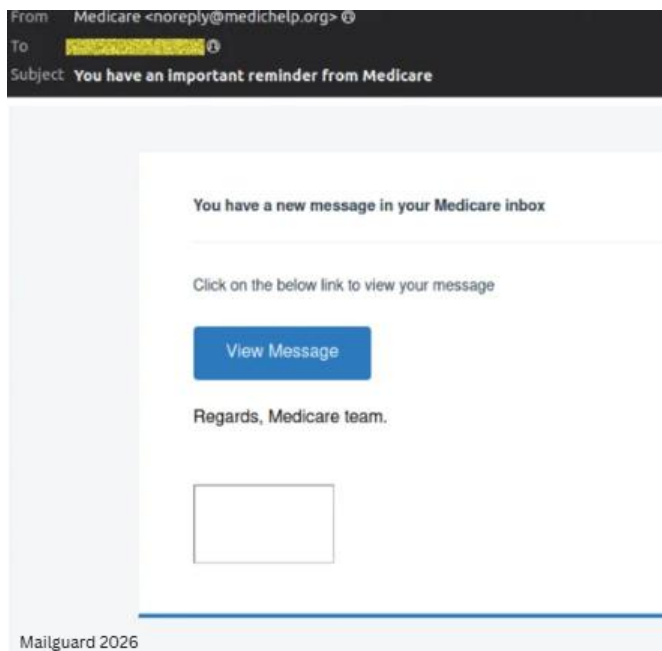
The victim will receive a call from someone claiming to be an AFP officer working on an investigation. The scammer may say the person has been involved in a data breach or financial crime, and that urgent action is required. They often pressure victims into transferring funds or sharing sensitive information.



Australian Federal Police 2026

Medicare

Another common impersonation scam involves criminals pretending to be from Medicare. The message usually includes a link directing people to a fake website designed to look like an official Medicare page. Once there, victims are asked to provide personal details, banking information, or payment to “restore” access or replace a Medicare card. Because Medicare is an essential service for many Australians, scammers rely on the fear of losing access to healthcare to pressure people into responding quickly.



Red Flags of Business Impersonation Scams

- Unexpected contact claiming to be from a government agency or major organisation
- Requests for urgent payments, especially through unusual methods like cryptocurrency or gift cards
- Links directing you to websites asking for personal or financial details
- Messages warning that your account will be suspended or restricted if you don't act immediately

The Top Scams Hitting People in 2026 — Plus a New Scam Emerging continued

The Unexpected Scam on the Rise: Microsoft Teams Scams

Scammers are now targeting workplace tools like Microsoft Teams to reach victims in a more trusted environment.

In this scam, attackers send guest invitations to join a Teams group with names designed to look like billing alerts, such as messages claiming there has been a subscription charge or payment issue. Because the invitation is generated through Microsoft's system, the notification email often comes from a legitimate Microsoft address. This means it can bypass many email security filters and appear more trustworthy than a typical scam email.

Instead of using suspicious links or attachments, the scam message is built directly into the Teams group name itself, which may include a phone number or payment instructions. The scam relies entirely on social engineering. If someone believes the billing alert is real, they may panic and contact the number provided, where scammers attempt to convince them to make a payment or share sensitive information.



Reddit 2026

Source: Trend Micro

Peer Partnership - A Celebrants Australia Initiative

To support the growth and confidence of new celebrants within our celebrant association, we have established a peer partnership program designed to foster guidance, encouragement, and professional development. In this program, experienced celebrants can be paired with newcomers to provide personalized support, share practical insights, and offer constructive feedback as they navigate the early stages of their celebrancy journey. This collaborative relationship will create a welcoming environment where new celebrants can ask questions, discuss challenges, and gain valuable knowledge from those who have successfully established themselves in the field.

The program is flexible and tailored to individual needs and encourages regular communication through meetings, calls, or facetime type check-ins. Partners will work together to set goals, review ceremonies, and explore best practices, helping new celebrants build confidence and competence. By fostering these supportive connections, the association aims to strengthen the celebrant community, enhance professional standards, and ensure that every new member feels valued and empowered from the outset.

How would we match experienced celebrants with newcomers?

Matching experienced celebrants with newcomers is approached thoughtfully to ensure compatibility, maximize learning, and foster meaningful connections. These are the several strategies our association considers each time:

1. **Interest and Specialty Alignment:** Pair celebrants based on their areas of expertise or ceremony types they frequently conduct (e.g., weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies). Matching newcomers with experienced peers who share similar interests or specialties ensures relevant guidance and practical advice.
2. **Geographic Proximity:** Whenever possible, matched celebrants are located near each other. This facilitates face-to-face meetings, attendance at local events together, easier collaboration, all of which can deepen the partnering relationship.
3. **Personality and Communication Style:** You can tell us your key characteristics to assess favoured methods of connecting, learning styles, and personality traits. Matching partners with complementary styles will enhance rapport and effective communication.
4. **Experience Level and Availability:** We would also consider the availability and willingness of experienced celebrants to commit time and match them with newcomers who have compatible schedules and expectations of support frequency.
5. **Voluntary Participation and Preferences:** We allow both experienced celebrants and newcomers to express preferences or options for the program. This voluntary approach encourages motivated participation and better engagement.
6. **Trial Period and Feedback:** We are happy to implement an initial trial period for each pairing. We review feedback and reassignment is available, if the match is not working well. This flexibility helps maintain positive and productive partnerships.

By combining these factors, we can create thoughtful, effective pairings that enhance the professional development and confidence of new celebrants while respecting the time and expertise of experienced members.

The Peer Partnership connection doesn't need to be a formal or long-lasting arrangement. It can be as informal as you desire - it may just be that you refer questions to your peer contact from time to time.