Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants

Membership Benefits and Savings

Australian Federation of
CIVIL CELEBRANTS

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From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

"Opportunities multiply when they are seized"
– Sun Tzu

ANTHONY BURKE
AFCC National President

As a Celebrant you should consider the benefits of joining a professional association – and the Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants (AFCC) offers so much, in so many ways.

The celebrancy world is such a wonderful profession, but Celebrants often need support, and assistance like insurance/copyright cover.

The Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants (AFCC) is Australia's largest and premier Celebrant Association offering support and benefits to help them in their endeavours as a Celebrant.

Membership of the AFCC offers many inclusive benefits such as insurance, copyright protection, software options, ongoing professional development, resources, networking opportunities, association marketing, annual National Conference and a vast range of support material including direct networking via a closed Facebook group with over 1000 like-minded members.

If you are looking for an association to support you in your journey, then please consider the AFCC. And don't forget, you don't have to wait until you are a registered Celebrant to join a professional association – what a great way to get help with your studies and planning.

I look forward to welcoming you to the AFCC.

Cheers

Ant
AFCC National President

From the EDITOR'S DESK

IRENE HARRINGTON OAM
Celebrations Editor

When I chose to join the Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants (AFCC), I did so because like many, I wanted a professional association and the insurance and copyright coverage.

But my reasons for joining were soon overshadowed by my reasons for continuing as a member, as I found AFCC offered so much more to its members.

In this special edition of our national magazine *Celebrations*, you'll find information about all the other wonderful resources and support offered to all financial members.

Many AFCC resources can be downloaded from the website at no cost and some other resources are available to purchase at members' prices through the AFCC shop.

It's hard to list all the assistance and resources offered to members in order of their importance, so we've just listed them all in random order, because what is important to some, is not necessarily so for others.

We have also included some testimonials provided by current members who are all delighted they made the decision to be a part of this association.

For now, happy reading!

Irene Harrington OAM JP
Celebrations Editor

AFCC NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The AFCC is managed by a National Committee of volunteers based around Australia. The Committee consists of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and up to six other Committee members make up the General Committee.

Elections are held each year and Committee members are elected on a two year basis. That means that half of the Committee retire/stand for re-election each year and half the committee remain to ensure continuity.

The Committee meets face to face three times a year as well as monthly zoom meetings.

Each year, Committee members are allocated a portfolio to focus on benefits, projects and ways the AFCC can continually support its members.

AFCC MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS & SAVINGS

Australian Federation of CIVIL CELEBRANTS

(Valid – April 2023)

ALL BENEFITS ARE FULLY INCLUSIVE AND MEMBERSHIP TO 30 JUNE EACH YEAR IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE

INSURANCE & COPYRIGHT

Included in AFCC membership is $20,000,000 public liability Insurance, $3,000,000 professional indemnity cover and copyright & APRA protection

SOFTWARE PROGRAMS

The AFCC membership provides you with free access to either Celebrant Suite or Celebrant Briefcase. Both of these programs, which include official forms, assist you with day to day activities as a Marriage Celebrant

GREAT RESOURCES

FREE access to a store of member information and resources on the AFCC website, eg Funeral Resources Guide, Other Ceremonies Guide, Certificate templates etc. Publications are updated regularly

CELEBRANT CLOSURE KIT

FREE access to the Attorney-General's Department endorsed 'Celebrant Closure Kit'.

A great resource for Celebrants and their clients

SAVINGS

As a member of the AFCC you will receive discounts to the AFCC Annual Conference, professional development/educational sessions and other opportunities

SUPPORT – FACEBOOK

The AFCC is here to support you in all your celebrancy endeavours. As a member you will receive regular communication and have access to a closed Facebook page with over 1200 AFCC members

SUPPORT – HELPDESK/PHONE

For any queries about membership, celebrancy, etc emails can be sent to **helpdesk@afcc.com.au**

Also there is direct access to a support hotline – 1300 555 875 for the cost of a local call

FREE MINI WEBSITE

All members of the AFCC have a free mini website included in their membership package which can be modified with your personal information to help you reach potential clients who are looking for a Celebrant

MEMBERSHIP PUBLICATIONS

A member receives a high quality, full colour online magazine *Celebrations* with access to a wealth of professional information and educational resources, the AFCC Code of Ethics, regular information, updates, reminders and advice on relevant issues via emails and One Month's Notice newsletter

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the year AFCC hosts network meetings for members to come together to learn and share with each other. Meetings take place across Australia and are heavily supported by the association. Networking is crucial to a business and we are here to support that

MARKETING

The AFCC has over 2000 Members Australia wide and is continually promoting the AFCC to potential clients. We are working to provide a better share of the celebrancy market for our members

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Receive the benefits of a website with an effective Find a Celebrant search engine. New members also receive a member lapel name badge when they join the AFCC

REPRESENTATION

Be a member of the largest and most progressive national celebrant association which represents its members to other organisations and government bodies, including the Attorney-General's Department and State and Territory BDMs

ENSURING YOU GROW

The AFCC has opportunities available to members to allow them to grow within themselves and their celebrancy business. These offerings are through Enrichment Programs and other networking and educational opportunities

FULL INFORMATION ON THE ABOVE IS OUTLINED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

Insurance Coverage

Okay, we admit it – insurance is not exciting or sexy, but would you offer a civil celebrancy service without it?

99.95% of ceremonies run smoothly, but accidents and mistakes are common human traits. Things (that's being polite!) happen.

What Insurance Cover really means

Some celebrants have asked about the real value of our insurance cover. At no additional cost to AFCC membership, the features of our public liability and professional indemnity cover for each and all financial members are as follows:

- Professional Indemnity cover up to $1,000,000 on any one claim and $3,000,000 in the aggregate;
- Public Liability cover up to $20,000,000 per claim per member;
- Cover of $100,000 per claim per member for property in physical or legal control, not being general property owned by the celebrant;
- Cover (above) for all civil celebrant services within Australia
- Cover for all past activities as a civil celebrant during the time you were a financial member of the AFCC; and
- Cover commencing from the day a celebrant becomes a financial member of the AFCC and continues while the member remains financial.

Note: This cover is exclusively available to financial members of the AFCC. Any claims paid would be reviewed by the AFCC and our insurance broker and a review of the limits (above) would be undertaken to ensure availability of full ongoing cover at no extra cost to members.

Consider the ramifications if:

- an attendee trips on your sound equipment and fractures their hip
- an attendee trips on the red carpet supplied by you
- you visit your client or potential client to discuss your service and you accidently knock and smash a family heirloom
- you fail to renew your registration and a marriage you officiate is deemed null and void
- your client or third party makes a complaint to the Attorney-General's Office and they launch an investigation
- another celebrant alleges that you stole and used their Intellectual Property or defamed their character
- an allegation is made that your breached someone's privacy
- you fail to notify the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants of an actual or potential conflict of interest between your practice as a marriage celebrant, and your business and/or other interests
- you fail to attend a ceremony due to an unforeseen event and the ceremony is cancelled causing distress and financial loss to your client

Copyright Coverage

The AFCC licence provides for digital storage, reproduction, display and distribution of copyrighted material, in addition to hard-copy reproduction that was available under the previous licence.

All financial members are covered from the day they join the AFCC at no *additional cost to the membership fee* for the rights to use millions of books, poems, journals and other publications without the need to seek permission from the author or copyright owner. There are, however, some 'Excluded Works' that are not included in the licence, the details of which are provided to members on the AFCC website.

There is also a copy of a set of questions and comprehensive responses (as provided by Copyright Agency) on the website, to make it clear what members can and can't do according to the new licence terms and conditions. That document also provides advice on how AFCC members can protect their own works and intellectual property from unauthorised use by others.

The good news is that AFCC purchases on behalf of all financial members, a Combined Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance policy. This policy is designed to respond to claims arising from your celebrancy practice, giving you peace of mind that you have professional support when needed.

Professional Indemnity Insurance – Covers you for allegations of professional wrongdoing by you in the delivery of your professional services.

Public Liability Insurance – Covers claims for accidental bodily injury or property damage to clients and/or members of the public at your premises or anywhere you work in Australia.

The policy organised for AFCC is comprehensive in nature, but like all policies, exclusions do apply. Some exclusions are (this is not an exhaustive list):

- claims alleging molestation/sexual misconduct
- criminal matters
- claims arising from work performed after the cancellation, suspension or termination of any statutory or professional registration or certification
- claims alleging racial or religious discrimination
- claims arising from non-civil celebrancy services. This would include event management services and hiring of equipment

AFCC insurance coverage now includes a Celebrant's Roadie or helper, in the setup, ceremony and pack up for ceremonies: in fact, anything the Celebrant would do which is done by a helper, is covered in the AFCC insurance package at no extra cost.

Members can apply for their Certificate of Currency very easily through the AFCC website.

Our insurance brokers – Focus Insurance Brokers – also have access to comprehensive policies and attractive premium rates for Damage to Business Property, Home/Contents, Motor Vehicle and Personal Accident and Sickness Protection.

AFCC Marriage Software Programs

By arrangements with third party software developers/owners, the AFCC offers member benefits of access to a marriage celebrant software program at no additional cost.

The packages allow celebrants to input all the information required for the legal documents that must be sent to BDM. Both packages are very user friendly and can be used on all devices such as iPad, iPhone, laptop or desk computer.

Because the AFCC now pays a licence fee for a program on a 'per user' basis, members can have access to one licence to use either the *Celebrant Suite* or *Celebrant Briefcase*. Both program licences expire at the end of the membership year (30th June).

Brief descriptions of the programs (*Celebrant Suite*) and (*Celebrant Briefcase*) are provided below:

The Celebrant Suite

The *Celebrant Suite* is available to financial members of the AFCC through an agreement with the developer/owner, **Byronware**.

It is a simple program designed as a management tool for marriage celebrant members and helps reduce mistakes, transition errors and omissions on formal documentation. Errors have been the subject of criticisms from State and Territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages and their complaints about celebrants to the Attorney-General's Department.

The AFCC does not hold any title over the *Celebrant Suite*. When ordering and being given access to it, the member must be aware that all maintenance, support and help will be provided by the owner.
The AFCC does not have, or accepts any liability attached to the program.

The *Celebrant Suite* is only available for the Windows platform and the minimum operating system is Windows XP.

A 'product key' provided to you by return email from **Byronware** to install the program is unique and allows the program to stay 'live' for the membership year, ending on 30th June each year.

At the end of the membership year the program will still be in place, but it does not allow any more ceremonies to be added until membership is renewed and a renewal 'key' is provided.

The records previously entered are still accessible.

The AFCC only provides the connection to the owner of the program and pays for the licence to be issued, on your behalf, as another benefit of your AFCC membership.

Celebrant Briefcase

Like *Celebrant Suite, Celebrant Briefcase* is available to financial members of the AFCC through an agreement with the developer/owner, Nick Brekalo.

The *Celebrant Briefcase* website has a simple program designed for MAC users as well as Microsoft/Windows and is a management tool for marriage celebrant members which helps reduce mistakes, transition errors and omissions on formal documentation. Errors are something that has been the subject of criticisms from State and Territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages and their complaints about celebrants to the Attorney-General's Department.

The AFCC does not hold any title over the *Celebrant Briefcase*. When ordering and being given access to it, maintenance, support and help will be provided by the owner. The AFCC does not have, or accepts any liability attached to the program.

The *Celebrant Briefcase* is available for the Windows and MAC platforms.

You will need to be a financial AFCC member to access a licence for this program and it is advisable to contact the AFCC Membership Manager to be allocated your licence following your signup. Go to: membership@afcc.com.au

The AFCC only provides the connection to the owner of the program and pays for the licence to be issued, on your behalf, as another benefit of your AFCC membership.

List of AFCC Resources available from the website

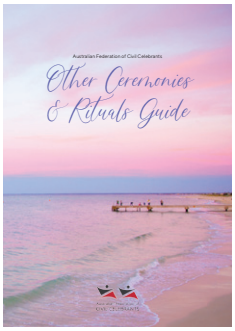
Most of these resources are free to download from the website or can be purchased through the AFCC shop.

The Wedding Resources Guide Volume I has been compiled from a variety of sources, including AFCC members, the AFCC National Committee and the AFCC Education Sub-committee. This Guide does not cover any of the legal requirements and obligations of Marriage Celebrants, but focuses on three main areas – the writing and creation of a wedding ceremony; the relationship between the Celebrant and the couple; and the running of a successful Celebrant business. Regardless of how long you have been a Celebrant, how many weddings you perform each year, or the type of ceremony you like to perform, this Guide can assist you in delivering a high level professional service, but is a guide only.

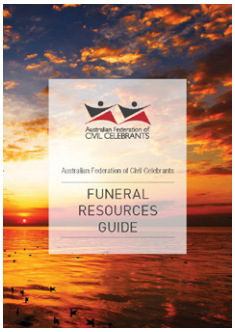
The Wedding Resources Guide Volume II is a natural follow on from Volume I and the information was compiled by a number of AFCC members. It adds different extra information to assist Marriage Celebrants in their work including information/ comments on marriage equality and wedding rituals and customs.

Vow Cards which can be printed from the website, were organised by Julie Chesson to bring a resource that will assist AFCC members and their couples who may like to use these during their wedding ceremony and then have a special memento of the ceremony. Recommended to be printed on either 160 or 210gsm paper to ensure a professional finish.

Julie Chesson also organised **Presentation Certificate** templates. These include a number of Certificate templates for Naming and Family Unity Ceremonies, as well as Renewal of Vows and Commitment Ceremonies. Recommended be printed on either 160 or 210gsm paper to ensure a professional finish.

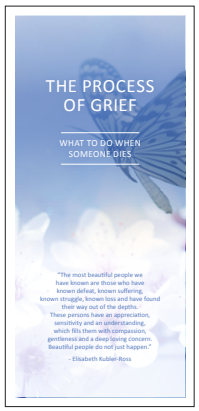


The **Other Ceremonies & Rituals Guide** was compiled by Julie Chesson and Stacey Maguire as a way to inspire members to approach and create each of their ceremonies to be unique, which they can present to couples and families for consideration. It offers information about different ceremonies and rituals, as well as poems/readings and sample ceremonies.



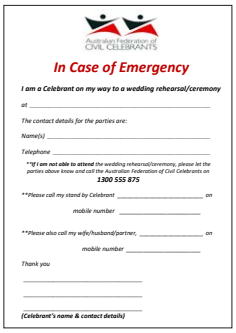
The **Funeral Resources Guide Volume I** was compiled from a variety of sources and edited by Anthony Burke. It contains information on the role of Celebrants, relationship with Funeral Directors, how to create a eulogy, poems and readings, as well as various tributes and rituals.

Like tributes provided in Volume I, the **Funeral Resources Guide Volume II** created by Michael Dillon and Irene Harrington, containing wording for RSL and Masonic funerals, this edition also includes information about the Police Ode/Prayer (Victoria) and those who have received an Order of Australia. Along with other relevant and useful information there are extra poems and readings, rituals and the use of the Australian flag at funerals.

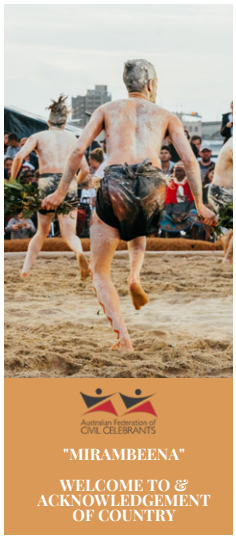


The AFCC **Grief Flyer** compiled by Michael Dillon is a resource to help Celebrants who deal with grieving clients. As well as the valuable information supplied, the flyer provides contact details for agencies in each state which can offer information and support. As Celebrants, we know that grief is a normal part of life and this flyer is a guide to help members offer assistance to clients.

Things my family need to know... was an idea that came to fruition through the efforts of AFCC member Cherie Arrowsmith. This booklet is provided as a "go to" for family/ loved ones and is designed as a reference for your clients, guardians, Executors or family members, to find the things that you or your clients deem important for people to know. It is purely a guide and any information is confidential. It is a fairly comprehensive resource and not all the data will be relevant. The document is available in writeable PDF or Word format. This booklet can be used as a marketing tool for Celebrants and their clients, care facilities, etc

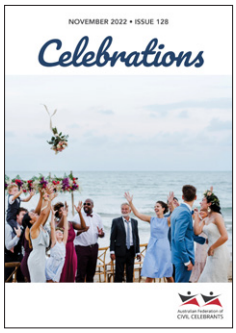


The **In Case of Emergency sheet** is a valuable resource for Celebrants to have in their "tool box" in case of an emergency which prevents a Celebrant from arriving for a ceremony or service. It was printed for delegates attending the Melbourne National Conference in 2018 and with the idea coming from an AFCC member Bev Robinson.



This **Mirambeena** brochure provides information about wording for both *Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to country* – and the difference between the two. Welcomes and Acknowledgments bring awareness to First Nations Peoples being the custodians of the land. To gather more information about the traditional custodians of a particular area members are encouraged to contact the local area council, Local Aboriginal Land Council or the local community organisation – this AFCC brochure provides general information and was suggested by AFC member Cherie Arrowsmith.

The **Celebrant Closure Kit** was originally compiled for AFCC members by Anthony Burke and updated by Kathy Pynsent and Irene Harrington, to assist members and/or their families in the event of a Celebrant being unable to fulfil their responsibilities either by death, illness, resignation or other situation. This document will guide and help Celebrant themselves, or someone managing their affairs, to effect closure of the Celebrant's role and dispose of certain legal documentation. With an obligation by Authorised Celebrants and those acting on their behalf to maintain confidentiality of information and records of, or pertaining to, marrying parties this document provides the opportunity to have all relevant and required information in one place.



Celebrations is a magazine produced four or five times a year and contains information and articles to help Celebrants in their work. Stories from AFCC members, AG and BDMs where relevant, worthwhile information on ways to assist in various aspects of work, whether that be weddings, funerals, baby namings etc are included in each edition. Whilst these magazines are interesting to read, they can also be archived to provide a great resource for future use in finding useful readings, poems, ideas etc.

More free resources

Why Choose an AFCC Celebrant? flyer
A useful resource available for AFCC members, the Why Choose an AFCC Celebrant? brochure, is a marketing tool compiled by Julie Chesson and Anthony Burke. It provides information and encouragement about why future clients should choose an AFCC member.

Celebrant Risk Plan
A Risk Management Plan assists Celebrants to show she/he has performed their best practice to assure any risk is reduced/mitigated prior to the ceremony being held. This can be achieved by following the information provided in this document, which was suggested and compiled by Rhonda McIver.

Sample Client Service Agreement (form)
Brian Richardson recently updated the Client Service Agreement which is a sample 'standard' agreement. Whilst it may not suit all Celebrants and clients, it is provided as only a guide to write a valuable personal agreement for use in your business. It sets out what the Celebrant agrees to and what the parties agree with, and is signed by all parties, with copies being held by each.

Code of Ethics
Explanation of the Code of Ethics which can be shown to potential clients and provides the best practise information for AFCC members.

Management and Policies
Various items such as AGM minutes etc as well as the AFCC Rules and Policies.

Rehearsal Tips
General information with tips for bridal couples and their attendants.

Forms Tutorial
Explanation of new forms introduced for use from September 2021.

Parking sign
This flyer can be used by AFCC members to place in their car when attending ceremonies of any type.

Name Change help list
This is a super handy same of a name change check-list which can be given to clients.

Rehearsal Tips
General information with tips for bridal couples and their attendant, to help Celebrants ensure they get the most out of their rehearsals.

Marriage Stationery and Forms
A link to the AGs website is available for easy access to the AGs marriage stationery.

Grief Flyer
This flyer offers general information about the process of grief and what can be done to help when someone dies. It also provides contact information for various organisations which may be able to assist in handling grief.

Marketing information
General marketing tips and materials to assist with Facebook and Instagram.

Education seminar recordings

- **What is CANVA? – Ant Burke**
- **Emotional Intelligence – Natalie Dawes**
- **Writing Meaningful Ceremonies – with Tania Nash**
- **Funerals – with Rhonda Funnell**
- **Social Media – with Evan Burrell**

Apart from all the free resources available through the website, the AFCC also has a shop where Celebrant resources can be purchased:

AFCC lapel pin

Face Masks

Marriage Register folder (cream)

Marriage Register folder (burgundy)

AFCC Facebook

The AFCC Facebook page is certainly one of our finest resources. The Facebook page was created as a closed and private Facebook group to allow financial members to network with like-minded professionals in a secure environment.

With having over 60% of members engaged in the page, this is a great place to not only share ceremony ideas, but also to seek support when celebrants are planning or writing ceremonies, or they are unsure of how to approach a difficult situation. And because it is a closed Facebook group, it is a safe place for members which means all posts and comments are not open to public view.

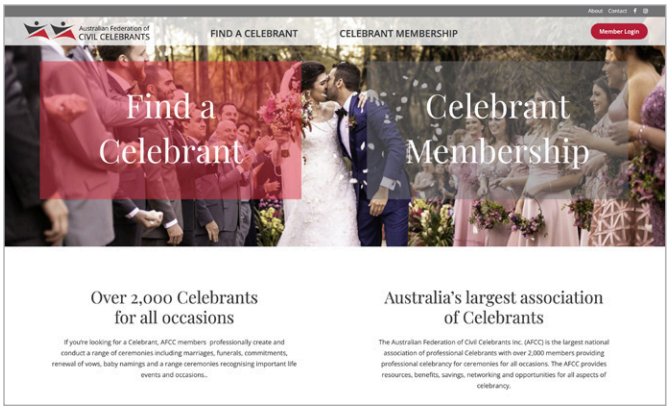
AFCC 1300 and Helpdesk

The National Committee doesn't work in an AFCC office from 9–5. Our "office" is in the home offices of National Committee members, or possibly in the kitchen or with their laptop on their knees in the lounge room, any time of the day and/or night, anywhere in Australia.

We have a specific email address for our Helpdesk: **helpdesk@afcc.com.au**

And a special telephone number: 1300 555 875. The AFCC phone is normally answered by our volunteer Membership Manager Rhonda McIver. You can always leave a message if she isn't available when you call and Rhonda will follow-up as soon as she can.

AFCC Website



Looking for a free website?

The AFCC understands and recognises how important it is to have a digital presence in the world of business. The AFCC has spent considerable time researching and investing in a website that markets members to potential clients.

When joining the AFCC each member receives a free mini website built within the AFCC website.

We have a 'Find a Celebrant' search that is being actively used by couples to search for a celebrant. In fact AFCC members are gaining bookings from their very own AFCC website.

You will receive a unique URL that you can use to promote your services, a profile page, photo gallery, reviews section and contacts page.

"Find a Celebrant"

Find a Celebrant is a search mechanism that we use to promote to potential clients. The AFCC actively promotes the *Find a Celebrant* search within our marketing strategy.

Part of AFCC membership includes a free mini website page that can be personalised. The pages are promoted to those looking for a Celebrant.

We are so lucky to hear from members that they have received bookings via the *Find a Celebrant* search and their mini website.

Networking

Networking is so important in every area of business and contacts made can be invaluable.

To this end, the AFCC, via its members, holds various networking events throughout the year. These are held usually on a three-monthly basis, although some members meet more frequently as they wish.

Meetings can take many forms, they can be very casual where members come together for a drink, maybe dinner and a chat - or they can be more formal occasions, where guest speakers, with a particular relevance to being a Celebrant, are engaged.

Also, every few months, the National Committee of AFCC meets in various capital cities throughout the country. When this happens, members from that area are invited to meet the National Committee, find out what is happening within the organisation and are given an opportunity to meet others from their area.

Contacts made at networking meetings can be life-long and many times we hear about members helping each other with ceremonies, if they are sick and needing a replacement, and in many other ways.

AFCC National Conference

The AFCC holds an annual conference for all financial members each year in July. Being a member of the AFCC provides you with a heavy discount to attend this amazing conference. There are always motivational and informative speakers. The education provided at AFCC Conferences is informative and relevant to members own personal development. Social events at the conference offer great networking opportunities.

Webinars

The AFCC has hosted a number of webinars. These are recorded and posted within the member resources section of the website for future viewing. Input from members on topics for future webinars are always gratefully received.

Education – Creating opportunities...

With limited ongoing professional development being required by the Attorney-General, the AFCC is very keen to ensure members have access to informative and valuable education opportunities. The AFCC has introduced special and valuable learning opportunities to provide members with the chance to upskill and benefit from these educational sessions.

As well as singular events with speakers, the AFCC offers members the chance to meet as a group, to undertake the compulsory ongoing professional development through the Attorney-General's website/portal . This activity will have a professional facilitator directing the discussions so participants will be able to talk about the questions and possible answers if they are unsure of a correct response. In addition to the compulsory ongoing professional development requirement, the facilitator will instruct the group in another skill eg public speaking, communication, social media etc. Networking opportunities will also be available and encouraged with lunch being provided. More details can be obtained from AFCC.

We are always looking for opportunities to offer education to members and often seek membership suggestions and input on valuable and suitable topics.

AFCC Enrichment Program: Funeral Celebrants

Being acutely aware that the AFCC has a responsibility to assist its members as much as possible in the development and maintenance of their skills, after two (long) years of hard work, multiple zoom sessions and far too many email exchanges by four members of the AFCC National Committee, the AFCC officially launched their *AFCC Enrichment Program: Funeral Celebrants*.

This is the largest project ever undertaken by AFCC and the National Committee is extremely proud to provide it to AFCC members.

The general aim of the program is to enrich the professional understanding and performance of Celebrants engaged in funeral celebrancy. It has been designed predominantly for practising Funeral Celebrants, but it may also be suitable for those who want to enter the funeral celebrancy profession.

This program is not a certified or accredited course which means RPL is not a consideration. If Celebrants choose to engage with this program, it is because they are motivated to become a more informed and skilled professional Funeral Celebrant. The foci of study reflect the key areas of funeral celebrancy work, but importantly, they focus on those aspects of the work that AFCC members have identified as being crucial to their abilities to be better informed, more effective and skilled.

The general aim of the program is to enrich the professional understanding and performance of Celebrants engaging in funeral celebrancy.

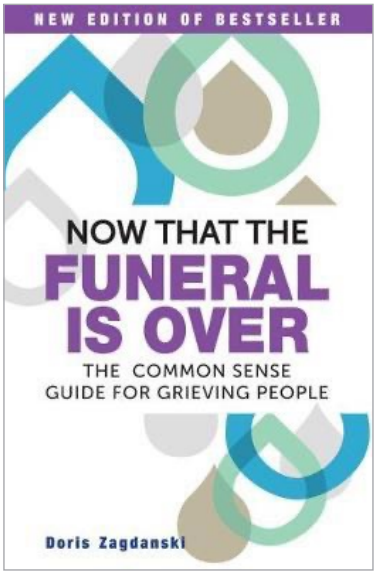
The Program has three Modules – each with a number of videos. The videos are interviews with wonderful information to enrich the skills Funeral Celebrants already possess. There is an accompanying Workbook that will be sent to you in the post and this contains an informative introduction to each Module and some great reflective questions designed not just to encourage you to apply the video content to your own work life but to facilitate your reflection on your practice or issues that you have never really stopped to think about.

Module 1: Understanding and responding to loss, grief and trauma in diverse circumstances

Module 2: Working with the bereaved

Module 3: Working with the Funeral Director

The cost for financial members to participate in the *AFCC Enrichment Program: Funeral Celebrants*, is $250 for the full program. All participants will receive a **free** copy of Doris Zagdanski's book: "Now the funeral is over…" (RRP $24.95)



Anthony Burke and Nigel Davies(NFDA)

Doris Zagdanski and Dot Orchard

TESTIMONIALS

What are our members saying about us?

ANNIE SAUNDERS

One of my first assignments for my celebrancy training was to research professional indemnity and public liability insurance. I was shocked to find that I would need to pay around $700 for this coverage. Adding this to the other costs I would incur like OPD fees, marketing materials and buying a PA, I realised this was a costly business to enter. One of my last course assignments was to research celebrant associations. This is where I found the AFCC and I was delighted to find that those expensive insurance costs were covered as part of the annual membership fee. The first thing I did when I was registered was I joined the AFCC. And it is undoubtedly one of the best decisions I ever made. Of course the insurance coverage is important and a huge benefit, but I found AFCC membership to mean so much more. AFCC members belong to a national, professional organisation. It feels 'exclusive' to be a member, but it is one of the most 'inclusive' organisations I have ever belonged to. The AFCC community is there to help wherever possible. The Facebook group is a fantastic resource for new and experienced Celebrants and questions are answered with respect. Celebrant Suite is another benefit that saves so much time and helps to streamline processes – and the ever present support and assistance provided is very reassuring. The AFCC Resource library is so useful and provides professional marketing collateral. Networking with local Celebrants is always fun and informative and the AFCC conferences are incredibly worthwhile, well organised, relevant … and great fun.

The list of benefits of AFCC membership grows all the time with our enthusiastic National Committee always keen to add value. I highly recommend joining the AFCC to all celebrants.

KYLEE PAYNE

Becoming a member of the AFCC, soon after my authorisation as a Celebrant in 2016, has been a key part of my professional and personal development. I explored other Celebrant associations, but found the AFCC was the right fit for me. The AFCC provides excellent resources, benefits, savings, professional development and networking opportunities. The AFCC is run by a volunteer committee of dedicated, experienced, professionals. They're all wonderful people who strive to support AFCC members to be the best Celebrants we can possibly be and to ensure the professional stance of our sector. I found my career trajectory into celebrancy to be initially somewhat isolating, having always enjoyed working as part of a team. I especially love the opportunities AFCC has afforded me to personally connect with other Celebrants. Through the AFCC I've formed lovely friendships with like-minded people who love their celebrancy profession as much as I do. The AFCC Facebook group is especially valuable to me as it's a great way to connect, contribute and collaborate in a welcoming, safe, online environment. I can both tap into the vast depth of knowledge from my Celebrant colleagues across the country and contribute to the conversations, as part of an Australia wide professional network. I've attended three AFFC conferences, thus far, and found them educational, engaging … and, very importantly, SO much fun! I'm looking forward to my next one!

FIONA HALL

I joined the AFCC after being invited by a fellow Celebrant to attend a couple of local network meetings. Whilst I was with another association they unfortunately didn't have local meetings and as a newish Celebrant I was hungry to learn from other experienced Celebrants and to share in the knowledge and challenges we all have. I have gone on to assist in the organisation of these get togethers including National Celebrant Day celebrations and I have met the loveliest, like minded celebrants. My membership brings many concrete benefits also; my mini website to attract potential clients as well as raising my SEO; excellent resources for learning and practical tools; an annual conference allowing for the sharing of information to build our business and professional knowledge as well as a space to connect to awesome fellow Celebrants and a dedicated private Facebook page where everyone can seek or offer advice. When you work in a small business as a sole trader it can be isolating and the opportunities afforded by membership with AFCC cannot be underestimated. Of course much of what happens can be attributed to our hardworking volunteer committee and I am very grateful for all of them and their immense contributions.

LORNA AYLWARD

One year after I became a Celebrant, I joined the AFCC; that was back in 2010 and I haven't looked back. I was amazed at the level of support and the myriad of resources that were available through the AFCC and this has continued to improve as each year passes. From the range of online resources and educational tools to networking opportunities and of course, the annual AFCC Conferences all of which, bar two, I have attended. Also, I wouldn't be without Celebrant Suite! I am very happy to be a member and should I come across a Celebrant who is looking for change or simply hasn't had an opportunity to join another organisation, I am always happy to promote the AFCC, particularly for Marriage Celebrants. I have found that the value I get as a member far exceeds the cost of my annual membership, so I am looking forward to many more years as part of this big family of Celebrants.

PETER GOURLAY

I highly recommend that all celebrants join and participate in the activities of a celebrant association. It not only makes good business sense, but membership can build and support our professional integrity and credibility. And when it comes to celebrant associations, none is bigger or better than the Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants! When I was first registered as a celebrant, I looked carefully at what associations were available and what they offered. The AFCC was the obvious choice for me and I couldn't be happier. AFCC offers insurance and copyright protection, current resources, marketing ideas, a comprehensive magazine, web updates, hotline support, discounted professional development, Australia's largest celebrant conference and a whole lot more. But on top of everything that AFCC offers, perhaps the most important thing that the AFCC offers me, is a sense of collegiality, new friends and the confidence I am up-to-date! And all for a very reasonable membership fee.

MARGARET PATCHING

Where do I start? I joined the AFCC over 14 years ago on the recommendation from a friend. Little did I know, that apart from reasonable insurance rates; a friendly approachable committee; amazing resources; collective wisdom; a Facebook page and opportunities for networking at a local level, that the AFCC have the BEST Conferences ever! When my friend Judy and I travelled to Sydney for our first Conference, the three days were jam-packed with excellent speakers; relevant training and a gala dinner where we met more Celebrants, enjoyed delicious food and danced the night away. We have since attended three more Conferences, one in Melbourne, one on the Gold Coast and the third in Adelaide last year. Each year has left us with many wonderful memories and friends and I'm very excited about attending the 50 year Anniversary Conference in Canberra in July. I highly recommend AFCC membership and encourage you to attend the Conference if you are able to. You won't regret it!

SHIRLEY NAYLOR

I joined AFCC even before I did my training. (I have been involved with Member Associations coming up 42 years and truly appreciate the value of a good one.) I am very impressed with the resources available through the AFCC, the insurance, Celebrant Suite, my celebrant badge; and the Wedding Resources Guide is frankly amazing. Loving *Celebrations* magazine! I even downloaded back copies to a folder and reading through them have discovered gems such as information on beach weddings, Penny Wong's contribution re same sex marriage and Social Media Marketing. Also loving the AFCC Facebook page and its wide ranging interactions, as well as the generosity of AFCC members towards each other. And love their National Conferences.

JUDIE NOVAK

I am, indeed, a very happy member of AFCC and encourage all Celebrants to become members also!! From the time I became a Celebrant 4 years ago, I have found my AFCC membership to be the best. I did try a couple of other associations in the 1st year for comparison's sake, but none of them were of the high standard that AFCC was, and still is. From the amazing Celebrant Suite that makes my business run smoothly, the fantastic resources on the AFCC website that I use regularly, the invaluable Facebook page where all of our questions are answered, and other inclusions such as free Insurance, regular informative webinars and of course the wonderful Committee that are there, seemingly 24/7, to help with any Celebrancy issue we may have, the AFCC is, by far, the best! The highlight for me though are the yearly conferences held in different cities around Australia where we have fun catching up with all our Celebrant friends we have made in previous years, while also making new ones. These conferences are so jam packed with information and resources for us Celebrants, but are also great fun!

Thanks for allowing me to be a part of the AFCC!