



*Vow Renewals &
Commitment Ceremonies
Information Kit*



*Celebrations
By Michele*

Congratulations

Organising your Vow Renewal or Commitment Ceremony is such an exciting time and I am looking forward to working with you on creating your perfect ceremony.

My Role To help you celebrate and work with you both to create a memorable ceremony that meets with your requirements.

Ceremony I can help you to create a ceremony that is heartfelt, filled with laughter, love and personality, striving to inject your own style and uniqueness, celebrate who you both are as individuals, as a family and as a couple.

Legals There are no legal requirements for a Vow Renewal or commitment ceremony

In this Information pack you will provide most of the information to help you get started.

If at any stage you need any further information or have any questions don't hesitate to reach out and get in touch.

I will need to get to know you both to make the ceremony unique and memorable and I am eager to start this journey with you.

Michèle

Index

The Purpose of a ceremony.....	Page 4
Outline of the ceremony structure	Pages 5
Couple questionnaire.....	Pages 6, 7 & 8
Celebrant's code of Conduct.....	Page 9 & 10
Making a complaint.....	Page 11
Ceremony Options.....	Page 12, 13& 14
Sample of Script Options "What to say"	Page 15 & 16
My Details.....	Page 17



The Purpose of a Ceremony

The Union of two people in a ceremony is an innate part of all societies. Vow renewals and commitment Ceremonies publicly affirm the private love shared by two people

It's a special time shared with family and close friends.

A vow renewal ceremony is an opportunity for a couple to renew the vows that they made to each other when they first got married. It is a way to commemorate their love that has deepened or matured between them. It is often celebrated once the couple have reached a milestone anniversary or an event in their lives. A vow renewal ceremony is not meant to be a second wedding but more of a celebration of their love of each other and their family.

The biggest difference between a commitment ceremony & Vow Renewal is that a wedding ceremony is legally binding and both the others are not.

A commitment ceremony is symbolic and used for couple's to recognize their union together, and can be a preferred option for couples that would like to elope (and have a separate official paperwork ceremony separately).

A commitment ceremony can have everything a traditional wedding ceremony has. You can both wear wedding outfits and exchange vows, and even invite your immediate family. The one thing missing would be the marriage certificate.

There are really no limits to what celebrations you would like to include and it's all still based on a great ceremony structure – just without the legal Vows.



Outline of a Traditional Ceremony

- **Processional** – The arrival of the couple to the ceremony, this does not have to be as official as a wedding processional and can be done together, you are able to arrive however which way you feel comfortable, you could also include your children, friends and family.
- **The Couple's Story** – I will talk briefly about your story, how you met, fell in love, funny moments or anything else you feel is something significant to share with your guests
- **Readings or Poems** – This can be some special words from either a close friend or relative, which can be relevant to the couple.
- **Inclusions/Rituals** – Spend some time researching rituals, this can add special some special moments for you both and if you would like to include other family members – I have some suggestions on page 12.
- **Other vows** – you are able say vows that may be special to you both, perhaps special words you would like to say to one and other these can be something decided and written together, or could even be surprise words for the other. This could also be a time to reflect on traditional vows from your culture.
- **Exchange of rings** – I can help you with memorable words to say if you would like to exchange rings.- see additional “Some idea’s on what to say”
- **Signing of Certificates** –I can organise for you a memento certificate for the day if you choose, you could even sign this before if you like and then this is can be presented to you both always allow for some great photo opportunities.
- **Conclusion – Pronouncement** – This is the end of the ceremony and where you traditionally are announced to your guests as “ We still do” or “Husband and Wife” “You may now kiss your husband” or it can be your choice of words.
- **Congratulations** After presentation of the certificate I say a few words of thanks and goodwill, also relaying any information to the guests about what’s happening next or similar.
- **Recessional** – The couple move to leave the ceremony area and are generally greeted with the best wishes of their family and friends, bubbles and rose petals.

Each ceremony is created for each person individually and as such, the above structure is a guideline only. Hopefully this will get you thinking about some ideas and what you would like for your special day – Ultimately your ceremony should reflect your personalities and values.



Questionnaire

Below are some questions to help me to piece together your ceremony. If you can please answer as honestly and in as much detail as you can so that I can get a really good idea on capturing your special day.

This is just a starting point, we can develop these ideas as we move closer to your wedding day.

Please reach out if you need any further guidance or have any questions.

1/. Time of your Ceremony & How long (approximately) would you like your ceremony to run for ?

.....

2/. Does the venue for your ceremony have any time restrictions ? or particular regulations ?

.....

3/. Do you have any housekeeping rules – use of mobile phones, posting of photo's on social media or any special seating arrangements, bubbles, rose petals, QR code check in

.....

.....

4/. Processional – are both parties arriving together or will one party be waiting with me at the ceremony area ? Will you have any others arriving with you ?

.....

.....

5/. Which way would you like to face ? your guests, each other & myself ?

6/. Do you have any guests you would like to make a special mention to ? – Interstate guests or guests via a video link

.....

7/. Are there any cultural elements you would like to include in your ceremony ? – Different cultural marriage traditions or marriage rituals (see ceremony options starting on page 15)

.....

.....

.....

8/. Would you like to include any special poetry, or especially significant words, either to be read out by myself or include a friend or relative.....

.....
.....

9/. Would you like some help or advice on writing your own vows to be included into the ceremony ?

.....
.....
.....

10/. Would you like to exchange rings ? (see some example of scripts you can use page 19)

.....
.....

11/. Do you have any special instructions for your guests at the end of the ceremony ? – Group Photo, moving to another area at..., drinks etc)

.....
.....
.....

12/. Will you be leaving the ceremony area for photo's and returning ?

.....

13/. Music – do you have a DJ ? Musicians, or recorded choices of music ?

.....

14/. Do you require help in making a play list for your ceremony and for it to be played at the ceremony ?
Would you like music played before the ceremony ?

.....
.....
.....

18/. Do you have a particular theme or colour for your ceremony ?

.....

19/. Do you require a rehearsal at the venue ?

.....

19/. I will need some information on your "Love Story" feel free to write below some things you would like me to include in the ceremony – some ideas are – how you met, your first date, was it love at first sight, proposal, children, homes, holidays adventures and more ! whatever comes to mind and would like to share with your guests as a brief snippet of your relationship.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....if you need more space and details you can also email your story

20/. Any other information you can think of ?

.....
.....
.....
.....





Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department
Access to Justice Division

Code of Practice for Marriage Celebrants – Regulation 37 L

1. APPLICATION OF THIS CODE OF PRACTICE

This Code of Practice applies to marriage celebrants (being persons registered under Subdivision C of Division 1 of Part IV of the Marriage Act 1961).

Note: Under paragraph 39I(1)(b) of the Marriage Act 1961, if the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants is satisfied that a marriage celebrant has not complied with an obligation under section 39G of that Act, including this Code of Practice, the Registrar may take disciplinary measures against the marriage celebrant.

2. HIGH STANDARD OF SERVICE

A marriage celebrant must maintain a high standard of service in his or her professional conduct and practice.

3. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE

A marriage celebrant must recognise the social, cultural and legal significance of marriage and the marriage ceremony in the Australian community, and the importance of strong and respectful family relationships.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH THE MARRIAGE ACT AND OTHER LAWS

A marriage celebrant must:

- (a) solemnize marriages according to the legal requirements of the Marriage Act 1961 (Cth); and
- (b) observe the laws of the Commonwealth and of the State or Territory where the marriage is to be solemnized; and
- (c) prevent and avoid unlawful discrimination in the provision of marriage celebrancy services.

5. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

A marriage celebrant must respect the importance of the marriage ceremony to the parties and the other persons organising the ceremony. To that end, the marriage celebrant must do the following:

- (a) give the parties information and guidance to enable them to choose or compose a marriage ceremony that will meet their needs and expectations;
- (b) respect the privacy and confidentiality of the parties;
- (c) maintain appropriate facilities to interview parties and provide office facilities,

including facilities for the secure storage of records;
(d) within a reasonable time before the marriage ceremony:

- (i) confirm all details with the parties; and
- (ii) ensure the return of all personal documents belonging to the parties (unless it is necessary to keep the documents for the ceremony); and
- (iii) sign any necessary declarations;

(e) if requested by the parties, conduct a marriage ceremony rehearsal;

(f) ensure that his or her personal presentation is of an appropriate standard for the marriage ceremony, and respect the expectations of the parties in relation to the ceremony;

(g) make efforts to ensure that the marriage ceremony is audible to all those present (using audio equipment, if required);

(h) ensure accuracy in the preparation of documents, and in the conduct of the marriage ceremony;

(i) arrive at the venue for the marriage ceremony no later than the time agreed with the parties;

(j) if the marriage celebrant has agreed to perform more than one marriage ceremony on the same day:

- (i) ensure that the parties to each marriage receive a level of service that meets their separate and special requirements; and

- (ii) be available at the venue for each marriage ceremony at least 20 minutes before the agreed commencement of each ceremony (unless, in the case of consecutive ceremonies, the ceremonies are to be held at the same venue);

(k) ensure that all relevant documents are completed and sent to the appropriate registering authority within 14 days after the marriage ceremony, as required by section 50 of the Marriage Act 1961;

(l) in relation to the provision of marriage services, accept evaluative comment from the parties, and use any comments to improve performance;

(m) give the parties information about how to notify the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department of any concerns or complaints they may have regarding the marriage services provided by the marriage celebrant.

6. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS SERVICES

A marriage celebrant must:

(a) maintain an up-to-date knowledge about appropriate family relationships services in the community; and

(b) inform parties about the range of information and services available to them to enhance, and sustain them throughout, their relationship.

How to make a complaint

If you have any concerns about my service or performance, ideally I would like you to please reach out to me so that it can be resolved in person for the best outcome for all concerned, but if an agreement cannot be reached please follow the guidelines from the Attorney General's Office to make an official complaint.

Web site - <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/marriage/complain-about-marriage-celebrant>

- Complaints must be made within 3 months of first becoming aware of the problem.
- You must use the official complaint form available for download on the web site.
<https://www.ag.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/making-a-complaint-about-commonwealth-registered-marriage-celebrant-form.pdf>
- You must agree to the celebrant receiving your complaint otherwise the complaint will not be processed.
- The Attorney General's Office do not have the power to make a celebrant refund money. Further information on obtaining refunds is available on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission - <http://www.accc.gov.au/>
- Once the complaint has been received by the Attorney General's Office your complaint will be acknowledged, assessed (if found to have ground) investigated and responded to.

If you need further information –

- Contact the Attorney General's office at – marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au if you have a disability and need help to prepare your complaint.



Ceremony Options

Your ceremony can be as unique as you would like, reflecting your own personal taste reflecting your own personalities and values. I have listed some additional rituals below you may like to consider for your ceremony.

These rituals are symbolic actions or phrases used to represent the bond you have created. You can also invent your own special ritual individual to you both, you can also research more ideas on line.

These are also a great way to include special family and friends into your ceremony



Hand Fasting

Handfasting is a beautiful element that can be easily incorporated into a ceremony where the couple's hands are symbolically bound in traditionally a marriage ceremony but can be adapted for a vow renewal ceremony. The term "Tying the Knot" comes from the tradition of Handfasting.

The Ribbon or cord can either be made by family members or the couple and entwined with a variety of colours with each colour having it's own meaning - I can help you further with these meanings (this can be easily sourced from spotlight stores or online). Some examples of scripts options can include –

"As this knot is tied, so are reminded that your lives are bound. Woven into these ribbons, into their very fibres, is all of the love of your family and friends. In the joining of hands and these cords/ribbons now surrounding your hands, so are your lives remain bound. As a couple you are always entwined in love, bound by commitment, the joys and the sadness, anger and reconciliation- all of which brings strength to this union. Remember it is not these ribbons or cords but what they represent that will help to continue to keep you as one, strong and together".

"The way the hand of the couple are joined when they are crossed like this to make the symbol for infinity. With this, may your love for each other be infinite and may you draw up on the infinite force of love that flows through the universe to flow through and support you. I can then ask a series of commitment/questions for example -

Do you promise to continue to love each other with all that you are

We do.

May the words you have shared with your family and friends here today, be a reminder of the love and commitment you shared throughout your married lives and now have made here today. Through life's up's and down's, challenges and triumphs may these words give you strength just like these ribbons/chords to continue to keep you close, tight and together.



Ring Warming

If you choose to exchange your existing rings, perhaps even new rings or even a significant piece of jewelry. A ring warming is a lovely way to involve your family guests and they can feel they have given you a little piece of their well wishes on your special day. The rings (or similar) will get passed to each guest where they can make a wish or blessing or just hold them (warming them) in their

hands before they reach you and your partners which by the time you get them they will be warmed with love, blessings and warm wishes from your friends and family for you both. It's a good idea to have a note or sign near the entrance of the ceremony to let the guests know that this will be part of the ceremony – I will be able to direct everyone to ensure this works well, ends up at the right place and time ready for the ring exchange at the end. (Some alterations to this may need to happen if you have a large group of guests) Some examples of script options can include –

“It's widely believed that precious metals hold love and energy, the more enduring the object the more energy will be absorbed, at this time starting with a family member pass these rings between one and other, warming the metals with your good thoughts and blessings. “

“ Adam and Eve – these rings now have all of the warmth, love, positive thoughts and well wishes from all of your family and close friends”



Sand /Water & Wine Ceremony

These ceremonies are lots of fun and can include, if you wish close members of the family like children, and grandparents.

Each participant has a glass container/vessel with different coloured sand. As the ceremony progresses each party will add their sand to a main glass vessel – of which the couple can then keep as a lasting memory of their special day. This completed vase of mixed sand of all different colours can represent the celebration of their continued love of the couple and their families. You can also do this with wine – mixing two of your favourite wines together and then both of you drinking the mixed wine, or a similar ceremony with water. Some examples of script options can include –

“We now celebrate Adam and Eve's continued union with a symbolic sand ceremony. First, we will pour sand from this beautiful beach where Adam and Eve stand today with their family and friends as they continue to commit to each other and their lives together.

“As these containers of sand are poured into the main container we remember that their lives are joined together as one. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated, we all wish that your continued lives together will be blended like the beautiful colours created here today and to always remain as one.



Unity Candle

This is a very simple and easy to organise ritual, that can also involve other loved ones like Children and Parents, or even just yourselves. This is normally done after you have said your vows

Each Couple each have their own candle, which they then use to light the central candle. Symbolising the unity of two individuals coming together to celebrate their love for each other. It would be advisable to check with the venue as to any restrictions for naked flames, or even perhaps if the ceremony is outside on a windy day may pose some difficulties. Some examples of script options can include –

“From this day onward, may both be surrounded in the continued beauty of the light of your love, may its light shine bright and steady upon your path together and may its heat keep you both warm through all the days of your lives and beyond”

“ This candle that you are about to light is a symbol of your continued love and commitment for each other, may it represent the fire and light you have for each other in the past, today and always. May the brightness of this flame shine throughout your years together in the future giving you courage, warmth and strength and importantly and everlasting flame of love to light each year on your anniversary”

There are also so many other options and ideas that you can research, or even create your own Tree Planting, Lasso Ceremony, Stone Ceremony, Rose Ceremony, Releasing Doves or Butterflies



Some Ideas on What to Say

It's your ceremony and it can be as elaborate and imaginative or as simple as you would like, even the simplest of ceremonies can be heartfelt and memorable. But here is a start to some ideas on putting your script together.

The Welcome (1)

Welcome everyone to this glorious day and what a beautiful and memorable day it promises to be. My name is Michele Johnston, I am an authorised marriage celebrant and will be officiating today. I'd like to thank you all for coming to help us celebrate the Commitment Ceremony of Adam and Eve, your presence here is important to both Adam and Eve, as you all share a special bond, they especially wanted to share their love with you in a small and intimate ceremony and for you also to surround them with your support and well wishes.

We also have some very important family members to welcome here with us today, Erin and Damien and their little baby girl Isla, who have thankfully made it across from Queensland to be with us today, I would also like to welcome Jean and Michael who are watching live from our face book stream from Ireland. Both Adam and Eve appreciate your efforts you have made to be with them on their special day.

The Welcome (2)

Welcome everyone my name is Michele Johnston and I am extremely pleased to be here with Adam and Eve on this very important occasion.

We are here today to witness their re-affirmation of Adam and Eve's marriage vows, to surround them with our love and to continue to share in their joy. Adam and Eve decided that they wanted to share their continued love for one another on this their 25th Wedding Anniversary. They were married on 7th October 1995

I would also like to Welcome the bridesmaids and groomsmen that were part of the wedding 25 years ago – Sharon Booth, and Michele Johnston with Best Man Ricky Fotheringham, groomsman Roger Vos.

Words about Marriage (1)

Many people believe that entering into a marriage is the final step in a romantic and loving relationship, as they see it... a couple meets, gets to know each other, fall in love, decides they want to go through life together and then take the next step of marriage. But marriage is really just the beginning of a grand adventure, that will hopefully be a long and fruitful life together for each of them.

But relationships must be sustained by the will to express it – the loving word, the loving smile, the loving embrace, the loving favour, the giving with graciousness and generosity. They know not to take without giving, give without taking. Adam and Eve have been able to access that their marriage is for life. They want it to last, they intend it to last, they will it to last. But more than that they want their marriage to get better.

Words about Marriage (2)

What a gift and pleasure it is find someone with whom we want to spend our life with. Committing to share their brightest days and weather our darkest nights with someone is no small thing and cannot be done lightly. Commitment is about trust. It's about patience, forgiveness, devotion, and hope. It's what happens when a relationship becomes a home, to which each partner can return, again and again. "

The decision to commit to someone is one of the most important decisions in life that will influence your happiness, growth and success and most of all it's a choice that will plant a fire in your hearts for each other, your families and bring peace to your minds forever.

Vows – to each other

- (1) Couple to each other "Adam - will you continue to have Eve as your wife, do you reaffirm your love for her and continue to honour and cherish her in sickness and in health, continue to be faithful to her, and find new reasons to love her every day"

... I WILL

- To each other - You make my joys greater, my sorrows more bearable, and my spirit known. I promise you nothing less than the rest of my life. This is what I mean when I tell you I love you every day.

Ring Exchange - The physical structure of your wedding rings and the metals used to make them are tough enough to resist breaking and will last forever. May it be placed on your finger where the vein from this finger runs straight to your heart and moves as one.

Ring Exchange (1)

Couple - I give you this ring as a symbol of my love for you, as I place it on your finger may it be a reminder of my everlasting love for you. Know that I'm always with you, behind you and by your side.

Ring Exchange (2)

Couple - please continue to wear this ring that I gave you 25 years ago as a sign of our continued love. All that you are is all that I will ever need.

Some words about Love and Commitment & Presentation

- (1) Ladies and Gentlemen: this is a very special occasion the fact that you have been invited to witness this re-affirmation of love between Adam and Eve tells me that each one of you have a very special part to play in their lives. We are all here today to recognise a love which has lasted many tests. We are also here today to acknowledge the depth of their relationship, this ceremony will strengthen the commitment and love between them both.

May the love you have for one another continue to grow and blossom with each passing year. We all wish you endless happiness, joy and love on this your 25th Anniversary of your Wedding Day

I present to you Adam and Eve – you may kiss your wife !

- (2) May the blessings of life, the joy of love, wisdom and strength be with you today and always as partners for life, you may seal this union with a kiss !! it is at this time I now declare you joined in Love

My Details

About Me – I am brand new to the celebrancy business, I have really enjoyed everything I have learnt so far. I have been involved in dance and theatre for most of my life and being a celebrant is almost a natural progression for me – It's a lot like being on stage! I've choreographed and produced a fair few shows in that time to, so I'm confident in getting things moving in the right place. I'll ensure everyone feels confident and rehearsed on your special day. (I can also help with that first dance if required).

I have 3 beautiful children with 2 girls having successful careers in the Dance and Theatre Industry, and my son who is in his last year of school who wants to study music.

I am a celebrant who is fun and engaging and I really want to capture your ideal day. I will strive to ensure a fresh and personal approach to all ceremonies which will be created and customised for each client.

Let's Celebrate Life !

Michele Johnston

Email – celebrationsbymichele@gmail.com.au

Mobile – 0414 878 031

