

Sample Ceremony

A Civil Ceremony does not need to be in any set pattern. Neither long, short, formal or informal. It really is **whatever** you want it to be...

Other than the essential declarations and vows (The **Monitum** which is listed in the Outline below in **bold** text and then summarised later under Key Elements – is required to cover legalities) the rest of your ceremony is personal choice.

I see my role as being guide and facilitator of each couples individual wishes! We will write your ceremony together, you will lead and I will follow. With the goal being my delivery on your special day of a ceremony that is both fitting and personal to you as a couple.

Outline

1. Seating music - as your guests arrive and seat themselves
2. Processional music for the arrival of the wedding party (recorded or live)
3. A welcome to guests on your behalf and to introduce myself as Celebrant
4. **Celebrant's Authority, Section 46, Marriage Act (Monitum)**
5. Presentation of the bride and/or groom by father, parents, children or other party
6. An introduction that says something about your ideas, hopes and aspirations for your marriage and may include what you would like me to say about you as a couple.
7. A reading (optional) maybe groomsman, bridesmaid, family or friend...
8. **The Asking**
9. **The Vows**
10. The Ring Exchange
11. Special Ceremony/Ritual/Other reading or special personal event
12. Declaration of the marriage and a first kiss
13. The signing of the Register with 2 witnesses - anyone over 18 may be your witness
14. Music during the signing
15. Good wishes or Blessing for the Marriage
16. Introduction of the newlywed couple & presentation of the certificate of marriage
17. Recessional music as you take your first journey as a married couple to receive your guests' congratulations!

Key Elements

Celebrant's Authority, Section 46, Marriage Act (Monitum)

My name is Deborah Lilley and I am duly authorised by law to solemnise marriages according to law.

Before you are joined in marriage in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses I am to remind you of the solemn and binding nature of the relationship into which you are now about to enter.

Marriage according to law in Australia is the union of two people to the exclusion of all others voluntarily entered into for life.

The Asking

This involves your consent to the marriage:

ADDRESS COUPLE: Have you come here today voluntarily to be joined in this marriage?

REPLY: We have

The Vows

As per Section 45 (2) Marriage Act, this is the critical legal part of your marriage ceremony. **You must use the legal words** but you may add your personal promises after the legal words.

EACH PARTNER: Can you please repeat after me -

I call upon the persons here present to witness that I FULL NAME take thee FULL NAME to be my lawful wedded wife (or husband).

The Law

Subject to subsection (2), before a marriage is solemnised by or in the presence of an authorised celebrant, the authorised celebrant shall say to the parties, in the presence of the witnesses, the words:

“I am duly authorised by law to solemnise marriages according to law.

Before you are joined in marriage in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses, I am to remind you of the solemn and binding nature of the relationship into which you are now about to enter.

Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life”;

or words to that effect.

.Nobody else at the ceremony can state these words.

I must state these words, as part of the marriage, with witnesses present, before you, the couple exchange your vows under Section 45 of the Marriage Act.

This exact wording is important because:

- It is your declaration of my authority to solemnise the marriage; and
- It explains the definition of marriage and the nature of the marriage relationship under Australian law.

However, the last part of Section 46(1) of the Marriage Act contains the words ‘or words to that effect’.

This means that the Law does allow for changes to the wording, as long as you do not dilute the words or substitute words that alter the meaning of the words in that section of the Act.

This is highly subjective and open to interpretation, as the substituted words could be seen to have altered the meaning of the *Monitum*.

The Guidelines therefore state that ‘the safest course of action is to always follow the wording in the Marriage Act’.

First Sentence

The first sentence reads:

'I am duly authorised by law to solemnise marriages according to law.'

Variations that keep the legal meaning are:

- 'I am legally registered to solemnise marriages according to the law.' or
- 'I am the registered marriage celebrant authorised to solemnise this marriage according to the law or according to law.'

Second Sentence

The second sentence reads:

'Before you are joined in marriage in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses, I am to remind you of the solemn and binding nature of the relationship into which you are now about to enter.'

Variations that keep the legal meaning are:

- Changing 'solemn' to 'serious' or 'formal'
- Changing 'binding' to 'permanent'
- Changing 'nature' to 'promise'
- Changing 'now about to enter' into 'formalising' or 'sealing' or 'binding', or
- Changing 'these witnesses' to 'everyone here' or 'everybody here'.
- The words 'these witnesses' should not be changed to 'family and friends' because that may not include everyone present.

Third Sentence

The third sentence reads:

'Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.' Given that the third sentence is the legal definition of marriage in Australia the words cannot be changed.

You can separate the first sentence from the second and third sentences and say them at different parts of the ceremony.

However, the safest course of action is to keep them together.

All three sentences are required to be said before the vows are exchanged by the couple, under s45.