



Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants (Inc)

National President
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April 23, 2007

Dear Colleague Funeral Director/Arranger,

Guideline Fee for 1996 — \$190

Twenty years ago Funeral Directors experienced a prolonged period of vicious criticism. In the media and elsewhere they were consistently criticised for exploiting the bereaved at a time of maximum vulnerability. But when the “victims” were interviewed on television, their universal complaint was the lack of quality in the **preparation of the ceremony**.

I remember the period and the incidents very clearly. It usually went like this. “This fool of a clergyman got my father’s name wrong, and then the idiot went on to say” etc. etc. This was not the fault of the funeral director at all - and lest anyone think I am attacking the clergy, I am not. Twenty years ago they were the only people who officiated at funeral ceremonies - and they were forced to do the funerals for all, even those who professed not to believe in God.

And then, in this one place in the world, Melbourne, a group of people set themselves up as a profession, to interview families carefully, prepare the words and music of the ceremony well, and check it painstakingly with the family to ensure that every word, every detail, was correct.

The group was originally named the Funeral Celebrants Association and is now the Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants Inc.

The Funeral Industry has been the beneficiary of this improvement in the quality of preparation. I don’t think I have to point out to you either that the clergy, under the stimulus of competition, have improved their standards.

The clergy have a difficulty here, as do we. They still live in the thought pattern that supported by a congregation with car, salary, telephone etc. the stipend should be low. This in so many cases is a fiction but old habits die hard. And then there are the ‘also rans’ - those who do a quarter the job, half the job, three quarters the job you and I know should be done and give satisfaction more or less according to people’s expectations.

Your research has shown that **repeat business mainly comes to you** if families were satisfied with a previous ceremony.

You can say what you want, advertise how you like, dress up in whatever clothes you think look good, but the bottom line is this. **There is absolutely no short cut, no substitute for full interviewing, preparation and checking. This is 7-15 hours of very difficult and exacting work. I repeat there is no short cut.**

In the long term then, if you want to maintain and improve your own market share, if you want complete professional satisfaction yourself, if you want repeat business, our members - The Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants Inc. - are the **only ones who guarantee the standard** of genuine and compassionate preparation and delivery of which I speak.

We have as I say been forging this standard for twenty years, with acknowledgment and thanks from some, and very little acknowledgment and thanks from others.

Standard Fee

Please note that the National Committee has decided that the **Recommended Fee for Funeral Celebrants for 1996 is \$190.**

Specialist Funerals

Please note too, that for the writer only, who seems to occasionally, if not consistently, be called on to prepare difficult funerals requiring a number of interviews and more than average demands of preparation and checking, the fee is \$85 per hour (average 6-15 hours). The last several funerals I have done have taken several days of preparation, to say nothing of the emotional recovery period later! I have no objection to sending my own invoice direct to the client. You need not be involved on the money side in any way. Our National Committee have approved my concentrating on specialist funerals as described.

With good wishes,

Dally Messenger
National President and Administration