

## The Celebrant Funeral Ceremony

**A celebrant funeral ceremony allows complete freedom of choice. From beginning to end it should be totally appropriate and authentic for the deceased person.**



*The Jazz group, Mojo, who played the recessional at the Funeral of the late Don Chipp MP.*

Dear civil celebrant client

Over thirty years ago a core of Marriage Celebrants realised that the public needed a body of truly skilled professional Funeral Celebrants who would assist families to create funeral ceremonies that filled the need to genuinely acknowledge the life that had passed. Such a genuine tribute had to be prepared properly, fully approved by the family, and result in a truly satisfying ceremony. We are still pursuing this ideal, but we need your help.

In the meantime, let's get one thing straight. Death is mostly unpleasant and distressing. Few people enjoy thinking about it, much less experience it. Yet it is inevitable. There is little we can do, when a person's time comes.

One thing only we can do. We can say goodbye, pay tribute, honour that person's life in a fitting way. This is not as easy as it seems. But this core group of which I speak realise how important a funeral ceremony is. They had in the beginning (1975) and

have now (2007) the ideal that they should prepare and deliver a funeral ceremony in a thorough, sensitive and professional way. And I don't mean just for "important" people, but for every person who has lived a worthy life.

So this is a serious message I write to you. I write on behalf of the celebrant, whose name appears on the special panel in this leaflet.



*Celebrant Diane Storey*

I seek to persuade you in the matter of Funerals to **take the initiative** and pay your Funeral Celebrant an hourly rate.

**THIS IS THE ONLY FAIR WAY TO PAY A FUNERAL CELEBRANT.**

I also urge you to delegate your celebrant to arrange the Funeral Ceremony on your behalf. This will empower the celebrant to arrange a ceremony worthy of the deceased person you loved and admired. More importantly, it will ensure you will have your wishes fulfilled.

Let me hasten to assure you this message is not about money. It is about enabling Funeral Celebrants to operate in an acceptable and unrestricted way. You may be astounded to learn that, even though you may well pay \$6000 to \$10,000 for a Funeral, the celebrant's fee, in most states of Australia, is an absurdly low \$180-200 (In Victoria it is \$400, - still absurdly low.)

***"There is no short cut to a good Funeral."***

The Funeral Directors (with a few rare exceptions) will simply not hire anyone directly, who attempts to charge over these fees.

The net effect of this policy is totally predictable, and I have seen it happen often. Idealistic, educated and enthusiastic celebrants do this work with thoroughness and skill for several Funerals and

then they either:-

1. Cease the work as one which is impossible financially. OR

2. They "burn out". To make ends meet, these celebrants do far too many funerals. One morning they wake up and they can do no more. OR

3. They lower their standards. They rely on stock phrases, familiar rituals, and tired formulas. They cut corners in all sorts of ways. And who would blame them? Keep in mind also that the \$180 (or \$400) is Gross not Net Income.

Let me give you just one example. As I write this, repairs on my ageing car cost me \$2450. Sound familiar? On the maximum ceiling fee set by the NSW Funeral Directors, I would have to officiate at fourteen Funerals, just to pay this one genuine business expense.

In my thirty years experience (over 1500 Funerals), thousands of conversations on the subject, and much study and soul searching, I have come to a firm conclusion.



*Piper Len Tresize*

When someone dies, the most important event, to almost everyone to whom I have ever spoken, is the ceremony. What is central are the words which are said, the music that is played, the eulogy which is presented, and the ritual and symbolism which is observed.

This cannot be done with slick or quick formulas. If a Funeral ceremony is to be truly personal it has to be carefully prepared with a family and just as carefully checked with them. Finally may I say - there is no short cut to a good funeral.

**Dally Messenger** is the Principal of the International College of Celebrancy. He was the Foundation Secretary of the Association of Civil Marriage Celebrants of Australia (1974- appointed by Lionel Murphy). He was Foundation President of the Funeral Celebrants Assn of Australia (1977), and Foundation President of the Aust Federation of Civil Celebrants (1994).

### College Standard Funeral

- ① The celebrant, in an unhurried interview with the family, discusses the deceased person.
- ② The celebrant notes all the information required to prepare a proper eulogy & ceremony.
- ③ The celebrant provides the family with suitable resources of poems and quotations to consider. Chosen poems and quotations enrich the ceremony, and highlight the values and principles of the person we are honouring.
- ④ The celebrant discusses music and photographs and how they are to be prepared and co-ordinated with the Funeral Director.
- ⑤ The celebrant organises family members or friends who are delivering eulogies, reading quotations or providing music, and how these are to be coordinated with the Funeral Director.
- ⑥ Having perhaps submitted several drafts, the celebrant checks every word of the final complete ceremony with deputised family member(s).
- ⑦ The celebrant coordinates final details with the funeral arranger.
- ⑧ The celebrant delivers the ceremony with sensitivity, clarity, dignity and compassion.

## For further information and advice *International College of Celebrancy*

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#### Websites

[www.collegeofcelebrancy.edu.au](http://www.collegeofcelebrancy.edu.au)

[www.apersonalhistory.com](http://www.apersonalhistory.com)

[www.celebrancy.com](http://www.celebrancy.com)

[www.marriagecelebrant.com](http://www.marriagecelebrant.com)

[www.celebrantscentre.com](http://www.celebrantscentre.com)



Celebrants are also available for  
Namegivings, Renewal of Vows,  
Weddings, Adolescent Rite of Passage,  
Commitment - and all other ceremonies.



#### Fee for Ceremony

\$  per hour (Est:6 -20hrs)

Your Professional Celebrant:

# *The Personally Prepared Funeral Ceremony*



*The Celebrants Centre  
and  
The International College  
of Celebrancy*