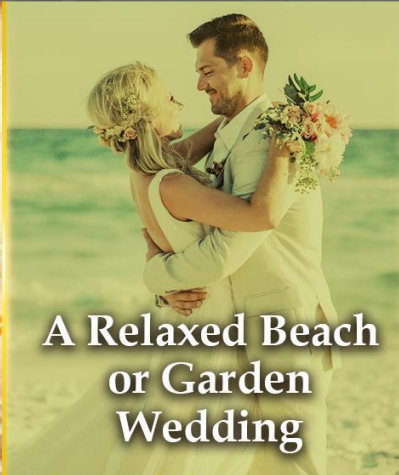


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A Surprise Wedding

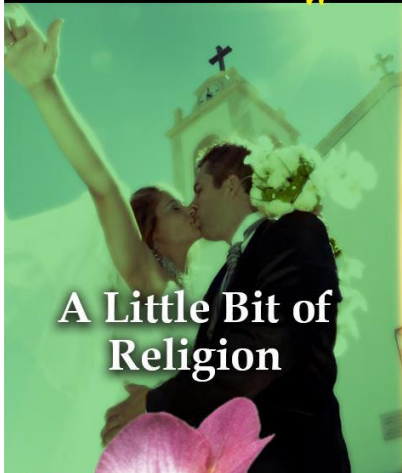


A Relaxed Beach or Garden Wedding



A Formal Reception Venue

what type of wedding couple are you?



A Little Bit of Religion



A Semi-Formal wedding with a Formal Reception at a Hotel or a Stunning Location



A Themed Wedding



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for that special day

Weddings, Baby Naming Days, Anniversaries

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So you want to get married – A guide to the steps in Australia

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Contact Me on 0418 564 852
Or email mario@treasuredceremonies.com.au

Treasured Ceremonies

Preface

I have been a civil wedding celebrant since late 2009 and since then I have performed hundreds of ceremonies.

Many couples don't know what a celebrant can do for them, so I decided to write this book to assist them in their planning and preparation.

Wedding Styles

Some ceremonies that I perform are the traditional style of weddings, usually held in places other than a church, such as a formal reception venue which probably has a chapel and where we have a bride and groom, or a partner couple, and a bridal party sometimes up to eight either side. Parents are involved as are other members of the family and I encourage many of them to also participate in the ceremony and there are lots of way to do this which you will read later. These are the majority of weddings and they are well placed in our society as the occasion to be remembered.

However, there are many variations to the original form of a ceremony. I am able perform a ceremony at any location – anywhere and anytime.

A couple can marry in such places as –

A Garden – this can be a formal garden or public park, such as St Kilda Botanical Rose Garden or the garden of one of your parents, a family place or even a friend. I have performed wedding in a large property in the country for instance under a gum tree. Always best to check with your local council for permit considerations. There are many gardens not just large council properties but many smaller gardens between streets in inner suburbs. I even did a ceremony in North Melbourne on the median strip of a quiet street.

A Reception Venue – and there are plenty of formal venues around with chapels and reception facilities and adjacent to beaches.. I performed one ceremony in the Local Court of a country town. Many venues have a formal reception area, sometimes several areas of different size and style. The venues often have garden or beach areas for weddings, chapels for weddings and are more than likely to have a plan b type area for us, should the weather turn bad.

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A Beach – many of councils allow beach weddings. Some require a permit and a fee. See your local council for more details. Some of them just want you to have a permit so they don't double up on ceremonies or have them too close to each other.

Restaurants – Often restaurants will allow weddings to take place just before you all sit down to dinner. For you it is a cheaper alternative as there is no fee involved. For the restaurant they usually allow it just before they open the doors or very early on in the evening before it gets busy.

Parks & Forests

Some parks have formal gardens such as Botanic Gardens and many others but there are also Parks and Forests for instance, where you can have a ceremony.

You will need to contact parks or councils about permits, safety and regulations. They will also provide information on fire management and accessibility as well as the cultural and heritage associated with the sites.

There are lively alternative too- how about in a hot air balloon or on a sailing boat. There is no limit to the places you can choose as a ceremony space.

You can marry in the air, skydiving from 10,000 feet though I would actually perform the ceremony in the aircraft, just before you jump.

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Why do councils charge for a wedding ceremony?

If you are planning a wedding on a beach or in a formal garden or park most of the councils have procedures for a permit to be issued. In some cases there is a cost for the permit and this goes into general revenue. But you can expect, once you have that permit that the area you have selected will be yours for the time that you have booked it for and no other person should use that area during that time. The permit gives you sole access to the area. The same for beaches.

Most councils will then ensure that beaches are combed or the leaves in a garden are cleared and the grass is neat and tidy. Councils fees vary with inner city and inner suburbs tending to be dearer though some councils will issue a permit for free and their main aim is to ensure your comfort.

Insurances

You don't need to add additional insurance yourself but you should ensure that all sub-contractors have their own insurance. If you are using a hire company for chairs for instance ask them about insurance. They should have insurance for their own property but also Public and Product Liability insurance to protect you and your guests.

As a celebrant I carry not only Professional Indemnity & Public Liability but also Copyright Insurance. It is not often that a celebrant causes any issues with a ceremony in terms of the public but a celebrant is in charge for a certain period of time whilst conducting the ceremony and should the need arise, I need to know I have full cover.

I also have Copyright Insurance for the case where I am playing other people's music on my equipment and reciting poems and verses from other authors. I have a library of popular wedding tunes and can source just about any song or tune from the internet to play at weddings. Also I have pages of verse, prayers and poems for my couples to choose from, to enhance their ceremony.

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Your Choices

Mario's motto - When you have selected and booked your wedding venue then you need to book your celebrant.

If you want the celebrant of your choice you need to choose your celebrant as early as possible. There is no limit to how soon you can book him or her.

Approach a couple of celebrants, check their websites, email them or ring them.

But I suggest you do it as soon as you can. I perform between 80 and 100 wedding per year. Often in summer I am busy Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. If you want the celebrant of your choice you need to book as soon as you can.

I do also get bookings while couples are still finalising their venue and of course I am always willing to help with that choice. I am venue agnostic but I do have experience as to which venues might suit different couples requirements.

Check out my paper on How to choose a celebrant on my website.

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Legal Paperwork

The marrying procedure starts with a government form and ends with a government form – your wedding certificate. There are a couple of main steps.

Step 1 - Notice of Intended Marriage is the first document that you will need to complete. You can download this form from my website and take a look, it is relatively straight forward. Names & addresses, dates of birth, parents details.

You can complete this before I arrive or I will be bringing blank forms anyway when we meet. You will both need to sign in front of me and I then sign that I witnessed you signing it.

A special note here: the Notice of Intended Marriage is valid for eighteen months but has a minimum period of one month from the date of signing before you are allowed to marry. There are some people who don't realise this and have booked venues within a couple of weeks and these bookings need to be changed, sometimes with consequences.

The celebrant will need to sight evidence of your date and place of birth and also a photo identification. For Australian born, it is better to produce your birth certificate so that parents are recorded accurately. The photo Id can be either drivers licence or passport.

For people born overseas, a passport is the best document to use. If you are a divorced person then evidence of the divorce, or your last divorce if there is more than one, is required to be shown to the celebrant.

Note that in all cases the original documents must be produced for the celebrant to sight. Photocopies of documents are not acceptable. If you don't have the documents I have listed above then talk to the celebrant. There are certain other ways of satisfying the conditions provided you have a genuine reason for not having the correct documents.

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Step 2 - Declarations

There is a document called a Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage. Sounds like a really serious piece of paper and it is.

You are both required to sign “that as far as you are aware there are no circumstances that would be a legal impediment to your marriage”.

Just before the wedding, at our last meeting or perhaps at the rehearsal I will bring this form along as well as the sample marriage certificate. I will ask you to check through the certificate to ensure there are no transposition errors and I will explain the Declaration which you will then sign and I will witness your signatures on the form.

The marriage certificate will be printed on the back of this form for the wedding ceremony.

Step 3 – Marriage Certificate

On the day of the wedding there are three pieces of paper to sign and this will occur towards the end of the ceremony after the announcement of you now being “husband & wife” or “partner & partner”. We can discuss this.

You both will sign two copies of the Marriage Certificate. On the day you will need two witnesses who have attended the ceremony, who will then come up and witness your signatures. Their full names are printed on the documents and I will then witness all your four signatures.

You will also sign what we call a presentation certificate which is a document you will keep on the day. I usually hold this until after the ceremony and give it to a responsible person from your family or friends or sometimes to the event manager at the venue.

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Step 4 - A Standard Marriage Certificate

For many couples that is the end of the formal process. However for reasons where a couple needs to prove their marriage then a marriage certificate issued by Births, Deaths and Marriage (BDM) is required.

This may be for Visa requirements, change of passport, amalgamation of bank account or some people for their employment such as department of defence employees.

I lodge my paperwork the same day of the wedding ceremony via an online portal to the state department of Births, Deaths & Marriages. The department will process the lodgement and documents onto their databases. In summer this can take a few weeks, at other times it can be as soon as two days depending on the state.

Once I have been made aware that your processing is complete I will email you the details along with a processing number which helps BDM find your files faster. You can then apply online for your certificate, pay a small fee (currently around \$65), provide evidence of who you are and the certificate will be mailed to you.

This is something you must do yourselves after the wedding or, If you wish, as your celebrant, I can include the request for a certificate when lodging paperwork and you can re-imburse me the actual cost only.

There is no way to speed up this process, so let me know if you are under pressure to receive your evidence of marriage, as I may be able to help you.

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Marrying a person who is not available to sign the initial paperwork

There are provisions for one person to sign the Notice of Intended Marriage and the other person is to sign at a later date. This may be where one person is working away at the time I visit, such as someone who works or lives interstate.

Sometimes the person might be overseas and in both cases, I will hold the paperwork with one signature until the other party arrives.

Note that the minimum period of one month from the date of signing the Notice commences with the first signature. The second person can sign at any time up and until the actual ceremony. I usually try to get this done as soon as the person arrives or at least a couple of days before.

It is important that I have time to sight and study the evidence of date and place of birth of the second person and also to ensure myself that the person fully understands what will be taking place

We are waiting the passing of legislation for the electronic witnessing of the Notice of Intended Marriage but at the time of writing this was still with the government.

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A couple who do not reside in Australia or reside Interstate

At times I am contacted by couples who want to marry in Australia or in my local state but won't be here until closer to the proposed ceremony and not as soon as one month before.

There is provision for that couple to send a signed and witnessed copy of the NOIM and supporting documents to the celebrant by post, by fax or scanned in an email. If posting I recommend couple use registered post. If email or fax then the couple must bring the originals with them and these must match exactly to the scanned information. I also need to check original evidence of place and date of birth.

A NOIM must be witnessed and received by the celebrant one month before the ceremony by one of the methods mentioned.

If in Australia the NOIM can be signed in front of -
Another Authorised Celebrant

- A Commissioner for Declaration
- A Justice of the Peace
- A Barrister or Solicitor
- A legally qualified medical practitioner, or
- A member of the Australian Federal Police or the police force of a state or territory

If outside of Australia the NOIM can be signed in front of –

- Australian Diplomatic Officer
- an Australian Consular Officer
- a notary public
- an employee of the Commonwealth authorised under paragraph 3(c) of the Consular Fees Act 1955, or
- an employee of the Australian Trade Commission authorised under paragraph 3(d) of the Consular Fees Act 1955.

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The Wedding Ceremony – Ideas and Structure

You should have no hesitation in creating your own unique wedding ceremony that reflects your values, your taste and your singular style. Just like you take photographs as a memory of your special day, so too, the ceremony should be created in such a way as to be a lasting memory. I always give my couples a copy of the ceremony afterwards as a keepsake to remind them of the special day that we created.

The most important aspect of all of this is the relationship between you and your celebrant. Your celebrant is a supplier. Sure, as a professional, he or she is knowledgeable about the marriage act, has an important role as a Commonwealth Registered Marriage Celebrant, and will be responsible for registering your wedding. But as a supplier to you, just like all the other suppliers, I want to do my best to provide you with the ceremony that you want and desire.

And I will do my utmost to ensure that the ceremony runs smoothly with few hiccups as possible. Yes, there are often little things which go wrong or might affect your enjoyment but I try as far as possible to watch for those, prevent them where possible or ride over them as smoothly as possible.

I have a wedding planner – a wedding planning document which you can download from my site. It does not matter how small or how large a wedding you are looking to have – take a look at the planner, it will certainly give you some ideas and help you to not miss any steps

We will talk about your ceremony structure in more detail when we meet and I have a 'Ceremony Kit' which I am quite happy to mail to you if you would like to read through it first.

I will bring along this free kit when we first meet and go through the steps in a ceremony in an order that I know will work on the day.

I am obliged to follow the rules of the Marriage Act 1961 and there are certain parts of the ceremony that must be present and must be performed in a certain order. I will ensure that these requirements are complied with.

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There is plenty of scope for us to customise the majority of the ceremony so that it has your own look and feel and reflects your values and wishes.

- Brides Entrance

If you want a traditional ceremony by all means play Wagner's Bridal Chorus or as some people now choose – Pachelbel's Canon in D. But don't limit your thinking to this – there are many many songs and tunes now which you can you utilise to reflect your feelings and the mood you want to create. Ask me for a list of them.

Imagine walking down the aisle to Bruno Mars, Brian Adams, Ed Sheeran, James Blunt, Jarryd James, Train or John Legend. The list is almost endless.

And I am sure your father really wants to walk his daughter down the aisle for her wedding but sometimes it is not possible or circumstances dictate that some other options need to be considered. The person walking you down the aisle might be your mother, brother, sister, uncle, best friend or even the Groom. I have even walked the bride myself on one occasion.

- Readings

It is nice to have family or friends participate in your wedding by reading. So when you are working out your bridal party, there is often that one person who does not fit ? They could be asked to read.

What could they read? Well there are numerous possibilities. Of course for those with religious parents or relatives, out of deference, they could be asked to read a prayer or something from the bible. There are also lots of readings and poems which are not religious in any way.

You can ask someone to read and choose what they read or you can choose the passage and ask them to read it. I have lots of examples of both or you can search on line, there are literally thousands, I do recall a wedding where one side of the family were religious and the other side not, even though both were from the same culture and one which you would expect them all to be religious. So one Aunt read a passage from the bible and the other Aunt read a poem by Kahlil Gibran.

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You might also have friends who are musically talented and can sing or play during your ceremony. I would encourage you to ask friends and family if they have the talent to become involved to create the memory for you. It might be violin, guitar, bagpipes or someone singing.

- In memory

Life goes on and sometimes events occur and families lose a loved one before they are able to join the wedding celebration. Sometimes we have to defer the wedding and sometimes the wedding will go ahead. If you so wish we can add a section at the start of a ceremony to remember those who have passed away. I feel it is better to do this early in the ceremony, immediately after the entrance. It can be associated with the lighting of a candle, the placing of a picture or some other method of recognising the significance of the person. We take time to say a few words in memory of the person and have a short period of reflection before continuing with the wedding. Be assured if this is what you want then it can be done with the dignity and respect that the person deserves.

- Vows

The law says you must say something to each other on the day. That is in the form of a vow or legal name "Monitum". A lot of groom's ask "do I have to?" And the answer is yes, you do have to. I tell my couples to think of this, not as a vow, but as a promise to each other on that special day.

In my ceremony kit which I hand out to prospective couples there are four pages of examples of these promises to stimulate the thinking of what each might say. These can be used as is, modified or do a search online and find more. You can even write your own.

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You also have a choice to keep this promise as a surprise for each other on the day. I am very careful at rehearsal to keep the content a secret. On the day I help my couples by having their vows printed onto cards for them to read from. I did have one bride who read hers from her iphone as that is something she always wanted to do.

- Ring Exchange

Another area to customise the ceremony is the exchange of rings. There is an opportunity for me to say a few words over the rings when they are presented, and it is kind of like a blessing. And the couple will also say a few words to each other as they place the rings on each other's finger. I have samples of these wordings in my ceremony kit. Interesting to note that sometimes we only have one ring, for the bride and that is ok, we just tailor the words to suit.

- Unity Ceremonies or Sand Ceremony – mixing of coloured sands
- Wine Ceremony – drinking wine together, the first time as a couple
- Wine Box Ceremony – presenting a wine bottle in a box for the future
- Unity Candles – to signify the coming together of a couple or their families
- Tree Planting – different combinations of ceremony around new growth
- Hand Fasting and Knot Tying

Another aspect of wedding ceremony are Unity Ceremonies. These are ceremonies within the main ceremony and can include such things as Most of these and many others, are around the concept of two people becoming one. Not losing their original identity but together creating a new form – a couple in marriage.

I have of examples and variations of themes

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- **Signing the documents**

You will be asked to provide two witnesses who are to be at the ceremony and you will need to provide their full names. They will need to be present all the way through the ceremony and sign your paperwork at the end.

Traditionally this was 'best man & maid of honour' and that can be if you like. But also think of variations, there a lots of choices.

Out of family respect you might ask two fathers to sign. I find this especially likeable by Asian families but there are other alternatives. If the Bride's father has walked her down the aisle then why not the two mothers to sign.

Circumstances might occur where immediate parents are not always available so other family members or friends can be chosen.

You should also choose some background music for the three or four minutes that it takes to get the signing done. Something light and quiet but nevertheless meaningful in the context of the rest of the ceremony.

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• Couples Exit

Now is the fun part. You are married, you are going to walk back down the aisle as a couple and you can choose some upbeat music. By all means if you are traditionalists then Mendelssohn's Wedding March is entirely appropriate. But there are alternatives.

Stay in the classical arena if you want to but also consider some of the more upbeat tracks that make you feel triumphant in your successful marriage.

All you need is love
Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm yours)
Your Love Keeps Lifting Me Higher
Walking on Sunshine
For Once in my life

The list is endless but I can help - don't forget - "It had to be you"

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Other important tips to think about

- Seating Arrangements

One tradition was “Groom’s family on the right, Bride’s family in the left” but why? Why not allow your guests to seat themselves where they are most comfortable. Sure keep the front row or two rows for the family and special friends but the rest can gather on an equal footing. If anyone asks me at a wedding “which side is the bride’s side” for instance, my reply is that “we don’t take sides at a wedding”

I also ensure the bride and groom are standing on the most comfortable side for them rather than forcing left or right. At rehearsal my usual question is “what side do you normally walk down the street together” and use this as a basis for placement of the couple and the bridal party.

- Bridal Party

The brides attendants (not bridesmaids any more) do not have to be all female and similarly the grooms attendants (not groomsmen) do not have to be all male. I have performed many ceremonies with no gender bias in the way the attendants are distributed and it is a refreshing change to be in this more presentable arrangement.

- **Bridal Bouquet**

The bouquet is supposed to represent new life and the tossing is meant to mark the next in line for wedded bliss. Traditional bouquets if made from real flowers can be quite heavy so you might want to opt for a fabric bouquet which will last longer, is easier to carry and will not wilt or start to lose petals during the ceremony. It will also keep for a long time if you so desire or become a keepsake for a parent.

- Bridesmaid’s Bouquet

Bridesmaids also used to carry a bouquet but always smaller than the bride’s. You don’t have to follow this tradition, change things up a bit. Your attendants could carry other meaningful objects – lanterns for instance to cast a subdued yet festive light. Something which represents your shared values.

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Questions and Answers *

Q. How can I help my celebrant to provide a personal and fun service?

A. I believe the best way for a Celebrant to create a personal and fun ceremony, is for you to give them as much information about you and your relationship. You could help them by answering questions like: - How and when you met; and the proposal? - What you liked about each other when you first met? - When did you decide that you wanted to be together forever? - What were the good things that helped you decide? - What does marriage mean to you? - What you each (individually) love about each other? - What leisure, sports and/or interests you enjoy together? - What does family mean to you? - What your hopes and dreams are for the future? - Anything else you think is relevant, especially if you have any children. What they mean to you and how they have changed your relationship. Getting to know my couples better, certainly helps me to create personalised and fun ceremonies.

Q. I need a suggestion for a special poem or reading

A. Your Celebrant should be able to help you with something that would be suitable or you can check pinterest and google which both have numerous readings and poems for specific occasions.

Q. How do I set up a wedding ceremony schedule?

A. This is something I discuss at first meeting. Sometimes I feel like a Wedding Organizer myself! We go through a basic schedule and work it from there. I usually go from beginning of the day to the end of the wedding and then work backwards. I know this sounds confusing. I genuinely find that this works well and I hope it helps you as your schedule is often the most daunting task.

Q. How do I convince my fiancé to elope?

A. Marriage is about compromise and about being open and honest. The wedding can be small and intimate with just the closest of family members present at a location you both love. The celebrant you choose would be able to develop a beautiful meaningful ceremony with you both so that it will be a momentous occasion. The reception can be equally intimate eg. going out to dinner, reception at home, cocktails. The money saved can be spent on a honeymoon or for a home. Good luck in your discussions with your future husband.

Q. What vows would you recommend for a commitment ceremony?

A. I suggest that couples write their own vows expressing their inner thoughts and wishes for their future. The only difference between a commitment ceremony and a marriage ceremony is that there are no legal aspects in the commitment ceremony.

Q. How can I make an uneven bridal party work?

A. There was a recent wedding with 7 bridesmaids and only 4 groomsmen, it provided for some wonderful photos, great fun photos about the mismatch! In the ceremony itself, it's not such a huge issue, if there's to be a recessional and the bridesmaids need to match together, it's fine! Have fun with it! Go with your gut and use the people you want to use in the ceremony whether there's a mismatch of one, two, three or four - just make the most of it.

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Q. Are there any affordable celebrants out there for a simple ceremony?

A. the cost of your celebrant should not be your defining point - it should be how you feel about the person that is to perform the most important part of your wedding day. The person you choose should be able to reflect your feelings to your guests and should set the scene for the rest of the wedding celebrations. Do you want your guests to sit/stand through a brief ceremony that has no connection to you and your fiance or worse still - a ceremony that is stilted and disorganised?. Or would you prefer to create a fantastic atmosphere and anticipation which then would naturally roll into your wedding celebrations? How much are you prepared to pay for your flowers, your dress, the cake, the venue - all these may be deleted and you would still be married and yet you want to put a cap on the only part of the ceremony that is essential? Every wedding has a legal aspect and every wedding must abide by these rules - admittedly you could opt for a registry-style of wording that is not personalised and delete the customisation, however essentially the same amount of time and effort is required for each and every ceremony - traveling to and from setting up, preparing the legal paperwork and so forth. You only have one chance to create your big day - make sure that you do it justice. My advice to you is to talk to a few celebrants and see what they have to offer, make sure that you feel comfortable with them and are confident that they can conduct your ceremony on the day, you need to make sure they will fit in with the type of atmosphere that you are wanting for your big day. Then look at the price.

Q. What is the best method for choosing the ideal celebrant?

A. The best method is to look in the local area, meet with them and ask questions. Look for someone who cares, is professional in attire and in their actions, who makes you both feel comfortable and takes on board what you want in your wedding. The celebrant should be able to offer suggestions and advice regarding the ceremony in order to make your wedding unique and special.

Q. Do the groomsmen have to be male ?

A. Some of the best weddings I have conducted have a great mix of genders. Consider them as Brides attendants and Grooms attendants and you have the answer. A mix can work really well.

Q. Do you have to say “ you may kiss the bride ?”

A. I support gender neutrality and we never used to hear “dear bride – you may now kiss the groom” . So my wording at this time is “You may now kiss” Of course in some cultures kissing in public is not allowed and therefore we exclude this step. It can be substituted with something else. Ask me about options.

* Questions courtesy of Easy Weddings - Expert Advice, Melbourne, wedcrm.com/advice