



JESS STANLEY

Authorised marriage celebrant, writer & MC.

(Yes, Stan by Me is a pun of my surname. I promise not all my jokes will be that lame.)



INFO PACK

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Dear Soon-to-be-Married Folk,

Thank you for getting in touch, and congratulations on your upcoming nuptials!

This information pack will outline a little bit about me and my services, the next steps for you, and hopefully provide some further insight into what actually happens during a marriage ceremony, because (unless you've been married before) most people don't really know!

The most important takeaway? I'll be with you every step of the process, taking care of the legal stuff, explaining anything that isn't clear, and providing general help and support. I'll also be sure to remind you of any upcoming deadlines for any paperwork or forms that may need to be completed, so you can sit back and relax, knowing that I'll be keeping an eye on these things.

It's my job to make the ceremony part of your wedding day as fun, stress-free, and "you" as possible. I'll ensure that your ceremony is tailored to suit your tastes, wishes and needs. Looking for something laid back and no-fuss? No probs. Want to have a good giggle at your own expense? Excellent. Needing to cater to the sentimental relatives and maybe let a little tear loose yourself? Let's do it.

If you have any questions or concerns at any point along the way, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I'm a door-is-always-open kinda gal, and I can't wait to get to know you both while we share this small moment of our lives together.

Onwards to the info pack!

Jess



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About Me

Howdy! I'm Jess, an authorised marriage celebrant, based in Melbourne. I'm also an [actor](#), writer and psychology enthusiast. As well as my Certificate IV in Celebrancy, I've earned a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Monash University), a Bachelor of Social Sciences - Psychology (Swinburne University), and I'm a qualified mental health first aider. I work as a freelance copywriter under the name [Speak in Jess](#) (yes, you are sensing a theme here of name-based business puns), and I'm a HUGE bookworm, so when I'm not solemnising marriages or performing, you can find me reading, recording podcasts, out doing some kind of kooky hobby, or planning a new theatre show with my theatre company, [Spinning Plates Co.](#)

Why did I become a celebrant?

Well, it was a long-term goal of mine, so when I stood beside my bestie as she got married to the love of her life in 2019, I knew that it was time to work towards helping other couples have the most wonderful and relaxing ceremony possible, that highlights the uniqueness of who they are as a couple. I wanted to put my pre-existing skills in public speaking, writing, and presenting with confidence to good use and work in a joyful role that provides a service to others.

What's my celebrant vibe?

As a celebrant, I get that your wedding day isn't about me. It's about the two of you and the commitment you're making. When I solemnise a marriage, I ensure that the ceremony is focussed on you and your relationship, and try to let the humour come out through the stories about the two of you, rather than me trying to be a stand-up comedian. My ceremonies are a chilled out mix of light-hearted, romantic and sincere. I won't bore your guests with endless generic droning about love and I won't nervously rush through the moment, either.

I'm warm, open and friendly, and I'm an excellent listener. I'm creative and grounded, with just a touch of quirkiness. I'm organised, and most frequently get the feedback that couples find me to be a very calming presence, and that one of my strengths is really capturing who the couple is in the ceremony.

So, that's a little about me. If you want to find out more, head to the [FAQ](#) page on my website. And if you ever want to have a D&M over some cheese and mulled wine (or coffee, always coffee), I'm your gal.



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Fee Packages

I currently offer three different packages, depending on what you're after:

The Full Package - This is my full service package	\$1,300
The Midi - This is for Commitment Ceremonies (no legals) or Shared Ceremonies	\$900
The Purely Legals - This is a short & sweet, legals only ceremony	\$650

You can head to the [Services](#) page on my website for more info on each of these packages, but in a nutshell? The Full Package is all-inclusive, the Midi is for you if you're after a Commitment Ceremony without legally getting married or a Shared Ceremony, where the ceremony duties are split between me and one of your loved ones, and the Purely Legals is a legals only ceremony.

Payment

Once you're sure you want me as your celebrant, I'll send you an invoice for a non-refundable booking fee of 20% of your full payment. I'll send the balance invoice 30 or so days prior to your ceremony.

Travel Fees

Please note that travel fees may apply if your venue is further than 25km from my base location in Melbourne. Travel fees may apply for rehearsals more than 25km away also.



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Next Steps

Let's Meet

If you've just discovered me online and don't know me from a bar of soap, chances are you'd like to start out by having a quick chat to see if we're a good fit. I usually do these over Zoom or on the phone.

Once we're all locked in, I'll reach out to you six months before your ceremony date (or sooner, if your ceremony is coming up quickly) so that we can find a time to meet face to face—this is so that we can all sign the Notice of Intended Marriage (NOIM) and I can sight a couple of your official certificates (more about this in the next step). It's also a chance for us to get to know each other a little bit, and you can tell me what you'd like to include or not include in the ceremony. I'll also check in again closer to your date to see how you're tracking, and if you'd like to, we can meet up again to talk things through in more detail.

The face-to-face meetings can take place either at my "home office" in Highett (AKA my lovely living room), or an agreed upon café/bar somewhere in the Bayside area. If you have kiddos or travel restrictions, please let me know and we can arrange something that works for everyone.

I will take care of every bit of paperwork along the way, and lodge your marriage for you with the Births, Deaths & Marriages office.



Stuff You Need to Sign Before the Ceremony

There are **two** forms that you will both need to sign before the ceremony can take place. The first is the **Notice of Intended Marriage** and the second is the **Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage**. What are those? Read on...

Notice of Intended Marriage (NOIM)

A **Notice of Intended Marriage** must be executed and received by me at least one calendar month prior to your ceremony and no earlier than 18 months prior to your ceremony. This is generally done together in person, at our first or second meeting. It's super simple to fill out together on my iPad, and I'll do all the work for you.

To fill out the NOIM, I must sight both of your:

- **Passports - Australian or overseas** (it doesn't matter if it's expired provided that it did not expire more than 10 years ago and had more than 2 years validity, but it cannot have been *cancelled, or reported lost, or stolen*)

OR

- **Birth certificates** (or an official extract of a birth certificate if the original is unable to be obtained) **AND a secondary form of ID that includes a photo such as:**
- Driver's Licence/Learner Permit
- Proof of Age/Photo card
- A Certificate of Australian citizenship plus another form of photographic evidence, such as a student card or other photo ID not listed above

So, to recap: if you have a passport, that is all you need to show me, and if you don't have a passport, you'll need your birth certificate and a second form of photo ID.

If either of you have been previously married, I will need to sight an original Divorce Certificate or Death Certificate.



Declaration of No Legal Impediment

Each party to an intended marriage must make a declaration before the celebrant as to their conjugal status and belief that there is no legal impediment to the marriage. The declarations must be made before the marriage is solemnised. This should occur as close as possible to the ceremony - this is because the circumstances of a party may change in between providing their NOIM and the marriage taking place. This can take place at an agreed upon meeting, the ceremony rehearsal, or, if not too far out from the ceremony date, at the time of signing the NOIM. It can even be done on the day of your ceremony, provided that it is BEFORE the ceremony; I'll just make sure to grab you both before we start and get a signature, then we're good to go!

Aside from the NOIM and Declaration of No Legal Impediment, what are the legal requirements for marriage in Australia?

- a. You must both be over 18 years of age. If one person is under the age of 18, marriage is still possible by parental consent as per section 12 of the Marriage Act.
- b. The ceremony must be witnessed by two people, both over the age of eighteen years. Your celebrant does not count as a witness.
- c. The Marriage Act 1961 requires that certain statements are included in your ceremony – the Monitum and the legal vows. Your celebrant will explain this in more detail at our first meeting.

Aside from a celebrant, who can witness the signing of a NOIM?

From Section 42 of the Marriage Act 1961:

If a party signs the Notice in Australia—an authorised celebrant, a justice of the peace, a barrister or solicitor, a medical practitioner, or a member of the Australian Federal Police or the police force of a State or Territory.

If a party signs the Notice outside Australia—an Australian Consular Officer, an Australian Diplomatic 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.

Please note that if you have another authorised witness sign your NOIM, I will still need to see all of your documents of identification.



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Some Further Info about Certificates...

To obtain a copy of your Victorian Birth Certificate or the Victorian Death Certificate of your former spouse contact the [Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages](#). If you require a copy of your Divorce Certificate or Decree Absolute, contact the Family Law Court in the state in which the marriage was dissolved. For further details visit the [Federal Circuit Court of Australia](#) website.

Foreign language documents must be officially translated into English and a NAATI accredited Translation Certificate supplied.

If a party does not have a birth certificate or passport, the party, or a parent of the party, may make and give to the celebrant a statutory declaration setting out the reasons why it is 'impracticable' (practically impossible) to obtain such a certificate or extract. The declaration must also state, to the best of the declarant's knowledge and belief, and as accurately as the declarant has been able to ascertain, when and where the party was born.



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Preparing for the Ceremony

(The below is for my Full Package)

Before The Day

If needed, a first or second face-to-face meeting.

This is so that we can do any paperwork required before the day, as well as get to know each other a little. Alternatively, we can do all this via Zoom if it's more convenient than trying to find a time to get together in person. You can also catch me on my emails or phone whenever you need.

I'll send you some fun questionnaires that will help me to create your ceremony.

Once we're all confirmed, I'll send you a link to the *special* page on my website (it's not that special, don't get too excited) that has plenty more helpful info about the legal requirements, example personal vows and writing prompts, and TWO questionnaires. One is all about your ceremony details (eg. Will you be exchanging rings, what colour would you like me to wear, who are your chosen witnesses) and the other is for you both to fill in separately and will tell me all about your relationship (eg. What's your first memory of your partner? How would you describe them in three words). These questionnaires will provide me with all the info I need to tailor your ceremony (and is hopefully fun for you to fill in, too!).

If you prefer to chat in person rather than sit down and write out responses, we can go through these questionnaires together instead! I get that some people don't find the idea of sitting down and writing their precious memories out for a near-stranger very appealing...

I'll take care of the legal paperwork.

I'll help you fill in the required forms and do all of the sending and filing needed. I'll explain everything to you along the way so that you know exactly what's going on.

I'll write you a bespoke ceremony script. *(unless you've opted for the Legals Only)*

I love writing, so I'm more than happy to design a ceremony script that's right for the two of you. Whether you want it straight to the point, mushier than The Notebook, or funnier than a Bo Burnham special, I'll do my best to cater to you (Bo-level hilarity not necessarily guaranteed). A civil ceremony should be relaxed, fun and tailored to the individual couple.



Help with your personal vows.

As well as providing you with some example vows (a mix of some that were kindly shared by my lovely friends and written by me. I'll never tell...) and writing prompts, I'll take a look or two over your vows before the day to check them for length, content, grammar, spelling, appropriate balance of mushiness and comedy - whatever you want. This also ensures that I won't steal your thunder and say anything in the ceremony that you want to say in your vows.

I strongly recommend that you write your own vows for the ceremony, and I can offer any assistance with this if you ask (I'm an experienced writer).

Your personal vows are where you get to stand up in front of all of your loved ones and pour your heart out (as much or as little as you want) to your partner. This is the best part of the ceremony in my opinion, and where you can share anecdotes, ideas for your future, promises, wishes, jokes, anything! They may go for 1-2 minutes each, or 5 minutes each – aim for about a page of writing and then see how you feel. If you'd like more suggestions on what to include or for me to read what you've written and offer any thoughts, please don't hesitate to ask.

I'll also ensure that everything is printed off on the day, so you don't have to worry about remembering a copy.

Rituals & Readings. *(unless you've opted for the Legals Only)*

If you'd like to include any special rituals or readings on the day, I can help to point you in the right direction and make suggestions. This could include a handfasting, a sand ritual – whatever you like! This is absolutely not necessary, though, and you shouldn't feel obliged to include a ritual if you don't feel a strong pull towards it.

One rehearsal. *(unless you've opted for the Legals Only)*

If you want me, I'll do my best to be there. We can go through the ceremony, where to stand on the day, the legal stuff that you'll need to say, whatever. We can even rehearse eating the food if you like. This is also a great chance to sign the Declaration of No Legal Impediment if we haven't already.

Relationship Education.

As a celebrant, I am required to recommend that you get pre-marriage counselling – but don't worry, it's not required that you do it unless you want to! Pre-marriage counselling should be seen less as counselling for relationships on the rocks and more as a lovely way to strengthen your bond and learn some tools for marriage. After our first meeting, I will email you or give you a physical copy of the required pamphlet, which is very imaginatively titled *Happily Ever Before and After*.



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On The Day

Tell me what to wear.

I'll dress appropriately to complement your outfits. If there's a theme, you'd best believe I'll get on board.

Meet my PA system. *(Depending on your Package and number of guests)*

It'll make sure all your guests can hear me, as well as the two of you and anyone else who may speak during the ceremony. My MiPro system can also be used to play music, so if you'd like me to help coordinate the playing of any music for your ceremony, please ask!

I'll conduct the ceremony.

A typical ceremony runs for 20-30 minutes. If you're particularly interested in making it as short or as long as possible, we can discuss this in more detail. I will ensure that I arrive at least 20 minutes before the ceremony is due to start.

I'll bring copies of your personal vows.

Whatever I can do to make it easier for you two, the better. Send me your personal vows before the ceremony (even if it's the night before!), and I'll have them printed on a schmick looking little piece of thick white paper in a big, legible font. I'll pass them to you right before you need them and take them back off you after you're done.

Commemorative marriage certificate.

I'll provide you with a commemorative certificate.



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After The Day

I'll lodge your marriage with the government.

Within two business days of your ceremony, I'll lodge all the necessary documents with the Births, Deaths and Marriages office (BDM). From there, it will take a couple of weeks for them to process it at their end, but once it's been successfully submitted, I'll let you know.

Please note that the marriage certificate that will be handed to you on the day of your wedding by your celebrant is not considered a 'legal' certificate, and is more of a memento certificate. If you wish for me to obtain a copy of your legal certificate on your behalf, I can request this at the same time as I lodge your marriage and it will be sent via express post to your address when it's ready. **BDM charges \$64.40 for this service**, and I will invoice you for this extra amount once the marriage has been lodged.

If you opt out of this but change your mind later, it's an easy process to apply for it on your own. Just [click here](#) to start it off.

I'll bug you with one last email.

A couple of weeks after your completed ceremony, you can expect to receive one last email from me which will let you know that your marriage has been lodged, and provide you with some links that will help you to change names and apply for your legal marriage certificate if you want it. I'll also send through a quick post-ceremony survey so that you can leave me some helpful feedback if you feel so inclined. If you have any photos to share from the day, I'd love to see your wedding album!



What *MUST* be included in the wedding ceremony?

There are **three** things that must be done in a civil marriage ceremony for the wedding to be legal, and the rest is just fluff (excellent, strongly recommended fluff though).

a. The Monitum (legal statement)

This must be said by me, the celebrant, and is a legal statement that declares me eligible to solemnise your marriage in front of you and your witnesses. The exact wording of this statement is as follows (small changes may be made, as shown in brackets):

"I am duly authorised by law (or 'legally registered', or 'the registered marriage celebrant authorised') 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 (or 'serious' or 'formal') and binding (or 'permanent') nature (or 'promise') of the relationship into which you are now about to enter (or 'formalising' or 'sealing' or 'binding'). Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life."

b. Minimum Wording of Vows

You two, the marrying couple, must say the minimum wording of vows. The wording for this is as follows (small changes may be made, as shown in brackets):

"I call upon (or 'ask') the persons (or 'people') here present to witness that I, (name of Person 1) take thee (or 'you') (name of Person 2) to be my lawful wedded (wife/husband/spouse)."

You can add your own personal, written vows after the minimum wording, so long as it doesn't contradict anything in the statement.

c. Signing the Register with Two Witnesses

During the ceremony, and after the Monitum and minimum wording of vows have taken place, we will take a moment to sign the wedding register and marriage certificates at a table set up nearby. **The couple, their two chosen witnesses and the celebrant must sign all three documents so that everything is official.** I will take you through these documents at one of our meetings before the ceremony so that you know what's happening. And that's it, it's official!

Please note that your two witnesses who sign the register must be over the age of 18. They may be related to you, a friend, or even a stranger (though it is definitely preferable that they know you and can attest to your identity). It's strongly recommended that you ask your chosen two people to be your witnesses before the actual day.



Order of Ceremony

A ceremony can be tailored to you, but as far as a pretty standard ceremony goes, the order may be as follows:

a. Entering of parties

Pretty self-explanatory. Whether you're entering together, one at a time with parents or loved ones, with children, or whether one of you is already in position as the other enters – anything goes.

b. Introduction

This is where I'll welcome your guests and set the scene. Generally, an introduction will include some personal touches about the couple, delivered by the celebrant. I may ask you to provide me with some fun information to help write this section to tailor it to the two of you. If you would like to acknowledge any guests in particular, who are present or not present, this can also happen here.

c. Reading

If you want to include a reading, it might go here. This is totally optional, and many couples don't want one. This doesn't have to be religious, it can simply be a favourite poem, song lyrics—anything you want!

d. Asking

This is optional, also. If you do want to include an asking, you can tell me exactly what you'd like me to ask you both so that you can respond with "I do" or "I will", or I can come up with something (usually along the lines of "Will you take so and so to be your so and so, and will you love and respect them, stand by them, etc."). Because this isn't a legal requirement of the ceremony, you can also make this fun and add something like "Do you promise to always bring her coffee before making your own" – whatever you like!

e. Giving Away

Again, totally optional. This can be tailored so that all of the guests present get to yell "We do!" in response to a question posed to them. You can go more traditional and have your family members "give you away", or you can leave this out altogether!

f. Monitum

This should go towards the beginning of the ceremony.



g. Legal Vows & Personal Vows

I would suggest saying the legal vows, then continuing into your personal vows. However, if you would like to do the legal vows and placing of rings at the same time, we can start with the personal vows then move into the legal vows.

h. Exchanging of Rings

This is often done in tandem with the legal vows, with both of you holding the rings in place before each other's fingers, then putting them on once you've said your legal vows.

i. Kiss

This is where I can declare you husband and wife, spouse and spouse, and so on - and then you can kiss!

j. Signing of the Documents

We will move off to the side and sign the three required documents – first the two of you, then your two witnesses, then I sign the documents last. I will present you officially with the marriage certificate.

k. Presentation of Couple

Lastly, I'll regain the audience's attention after the signing, and present you to your guests! As this is a non-legal part of the ceremony, I can "present" you to your guests using whatever wording you like (eg. "For the very first time, I now present to you, Mr and Mrs Wolfgang!/the Mrs Wolfgangs!/Mr and Mr Wolfgang!/the Wolfgangs!/the Wolfgang-Salieris!"). Please note that if either or both of you intend to change your surname post-wedding, this must be done separately and the use of a different surname for you at the end of your ceremony does not constitute a legal change of name. You can read more about this on the [Births, Deaths and Marriages website](#).

Now, that all may seem like a lot, but it will fly by in less than halfa! A typical ceremony runs for 25 to 30 minutes.



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Useful Links

So, that was a whole bunch of info to get you started. I know it can feel overwhelming, but I want to assure you that I've got your backs, and will take care of everything ceremony-related and all of the legalities to get you married, so that you can focus on all the other things – most importantly, enjoying yourselves!

To continue on the journey, head to the [Couples Page](#) on my website. Here you'll find the Ceremony & Couple's Questionnaire, examples of [personal vows](#), [music suggestions & copyright info](#), [relationship education & counselling information](#), and plenty more goodies.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch to chat further.

Looking forward to marrying you!

Jess Stanley

xxx