

14.5 AUTHORISED MARRIAGE CELEBRANT REQUIREMENTS

1 PRINCIPLE

Under the *Marriage Act 1961* a person is entitled to registration for the solemnization of marriages if:

- (i) the person is a minister of religion of a recognised denomination; and
- (ii) the person is nominated for registration by that denomination (s.33).

2 MATTERS TO NOTE

General Secretary as Nominated Authority

In the Uniting Church the General Secretary is the person authorised (known as the Nominating Authority) who submits the names of persons from the Uniting Church to be authorised to solemnize marriages according to the rites of the Uniting Church.

Length of Authorisation

It has become the practice in the Uniting Church in Western Australia that ordained ministers who are authorised celebrants continue such authorisation until they die or request their names to be removed. *Retired ministers are requested to notify the General Secretary if they no longer wish to continue as an authorised celebrant.*

Scope of Authorisations

There have been a number of requests from individuals and congregations for members of the church other than ordained ministers, to be given the authority to conduct marriages. The circumstances in which such requests are made vary. They include: requests such as lay individuals in rural communities where no minister is in placement; lay chaplains or Ministry of Pastor roles.

Generally the practice of the Registrar General is to authorise automatically any person nominated by the denomination as an appropriate person to solemnise marriages within that church and according to the rites of the denomination. However it should be noted that the Registrar General may refuse to register an applicant if the Registrar believes that there are already sufficient ministers of religion of the denomination to meet the needs in that locality, the applicant is not a fit and proper person to solemnize marriages or that the applicant is unlikely to devote a substantial part of their time to the performance of functions generally performed by a minister of religion.

Although the issue is one that is dealt with irregularly, the General Secretary has developed the following understanding of how to deal with this matter.

- Application for authorisation as a marriage celebrant must come through the congregation or placement that the person is ministering in.
- The application is endorsed by the Pastoral Relations Committee.
- The Presbytery provides training, and/or mentorship in such areas as the theology of Christian marriage, the theological pastoral and teaching dimensions of the Uniting Church's Service of Marriage, the legal requirements for solemnisation of marriages and knowledge of appropriate avenues for preparation for marriage counselling.

- The nominated person may only solemnise marriages in the context of and arising out of their placement context or specified role within the congregation; and with the Church Council/placement's knowledge and approval.
- The person must advise the couples seeking to be married that he or she is authorised to conduct marriages within the Uniting Church but is not an ordained minister and that the Uniting Church's Service of Marriage will be used.
- This authorisation is terminated once the person leaves the placement/congregation.

3 PROCEDURE

To become an Authorised Celebrant with the Uniting Church in Western Australia the following process needs to be followed:

- The Minister needs to complete the middle section of the *Application for Registration of Minister of Religion* and *Statutory Declaration on the Nomination Form*:
<https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Marriage/Documents/NominationAndApplicationForRegistrationOfMinisterOfReligion.pdf>
- Once the Minister has completed their sections the form is to be forwarded to the General Secretary of the Synod of Western Australia who will complete the section entitled *Nomination of Minister of Religion*. The General Secretary will then notify the Registrar General's Office.
- The Registrar General's Office will appoint and register the applicant, allocate a registration number and forward confirmation with a Minister's Reference Kit. The Minister's Reference Kit is for training and future reference.
- The Registrar General's office will notify the General Secretary of the applicant's registration. In Western Australia the applicant will be registered with a 'W' number.
- Note: The Registrar General's office avail themselves for assistance by phone as required. (Telephone: 1300 305 021 Local Free Call)

It is important to note that the Registrar General's office does not examine or interview the minister's knowledge of the legal requirements of their appointment as a Marriage Celebrant, as was required prior to late 2010. It is expected however that the minister will be *fully conversant* with the Minister's Reference Kit that is issued electronically by the Registrar General's office.

To resource this process the newly appointed Minister will be contacted by the PR&PC Administrator who will organise a time to visit with the General Secretary or make contact. It is possible that the General Secretary may wish to refer this to the PR&PC Coordinator or ministerial colleague to follow up.

4 REFERENCES

Email: www.ag.gov.au/celebrants

[Note this website has very good resources and contact numbers for enquiries]

Contact for Marriage Documents

Canprint Communications Pty Ltd, PO Box 7456, CANBERRA ACT 2610

Telephone: 1300 656 863

Email: marriage@infoservices.com.au