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Dear Soon-to-be-Married Folk,

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

This info 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 before and 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 everything, and providing general help and support. I’ll also be sure to remind you of any upcoming deadlines for any paperwork or steps that 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. Aiming to keep things a bit more traditional and sophisticated? 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, as much or as little as you want me to, while we share this small moment of our lives together. I get that some people really want to get to know their celebrant, while others like to keep things private and this is simply a service that you’re purchasing. Either way, I’m here for you.

Onwards to the info pack!  
Jess Stanley

## About Me

Hi there! I'm Jess, an authorised marriage celebrant born and raised in Melbourne. I'm also an actor, voice artist, and writer. As well as my Certificate IV in Celebrancy, I hold a Bachelor of Social Sciences, a Bachelor of Performing Arts, and I'm a qualified Mental Health First Aider. I'm currently training to become a qualified Intimacy Coordinator (feel free to ask me what on earth that even means when we meet). I also work in theatre in education, touring to schools around the state to perform for Year 12 students.

I'm a bookworm, film and trivia enthusiast and love a hobby, so when I'm not solemnising marriages or performing in the theatre world, you can find me reading, listening to or recording a podcast or audiobook, or trying out some fun new physical activity. Basically, yes—I'm a bit of a nerd and lovin' it.



### Why did I become a celebrant?

Throughout my 20s it was in the back of my mind that I'd love to become a celebrant so that I work a job that was more community-focussed, while still making use of my pre-existing skills and passions (writing, public speaking and reading love stories). When I got to be bridesmaid for my bestie in 2019, that was the final push I needed to sign up for training, and a plus of Covid was that I was able to complete the full course while in lockdown. I became qualified in 2021 and within less than a year was able to quit my day job and pursue celebrancy and my other passions full time.

### What's my celebrant vibe?

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. My ceremonies are a mix of light-hearted, relaxed and sincere, while still honouring the significance of the occasion. Any humour will come from speaking about the two of you, rather than me trying to showboat or crack jokes. I don't do generic, aimless musings about love and I won't nervously rush through the moment, either. If you're anxious about being the centre of attention or forgetting what you're meant to be doing, I'll be right there with you to talk you through every step and soothe your nerves.

I'm warm, friendly and a good listener. I'm grounded and highly organised, with just a touch of quirkiness. I frequently get the feedback that couples found me to be a very calming presence on their wedding day, and that their guests felt that I really captured who they are as a couple during their ceremony—which is my ultimate goal.

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, coffee and mulled wine (or chilled red), I'm your gal.

# Fees & Packages

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

<b>The Full Package</b> - This is my full service package	<b>\$1,300</b>
<b>The Midi</b> - This is for Commitment Ceremonies (no legals) or Sidecar (Shared) Ceremonies	<b>\$900</b>
<b>The Purely Legals</b> - This is a short & sweet, legals only ceremony	<b>\$650</b>
<b>MCing</b> - Usually beginning once the ceremony is over, costed per hour	<b>\$250</b>

*You can find out more about each of these packages on the next few pages, or head to the [Services](#) page on my website.*

## Payment

Once you're sure you want me as your celebrant, I'll send you an invoice for a non-refundable booking fee of 30% of your full payment. I'll send the balance invoice around 60 days prior to your ceremony, with the amount due 30 days prior to your ceremony. You can pay via direct deposit, credit card, PayPal, Apple Pay, or cash if preferred.

## Travel Fees

Please note that travel fees may apply if your venue is further than 25km from my base location in Highett, Melbourne, calculated at a rate of \$1 per km (not including the first 25km that I travel). For example, if your venue is 75km from my location, this would incur a travel fee of \$100 for one round trip to the venue (50km one way x 2 = \$100). Travel fees may apply for rehearsals at venues more than 25km away also.

## Legal Marriage Certificate Fee

Please note that the marriage certificate that we will sign on your wedding day and that you will take home is a "commemorative" certificate and not considered a legal document. Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria have a simple application process and charge a small fee (currently priced at \$64.40 until the end of the 2024 financial year) to receive a copy of your legal marriage certificate posted to your address.

If you wish for me to apply for a copy of your legal certificate on your behalf, I can request this at the same time as I lodge your marriage and will include the cost to cover this in my final invoice to you.

## *The Full Package*

This is my standard package that includes it all: a face-to-face meeting, questionnaires to help craft your ceremony, a ceremony rehearsal, help writing your personal vows, and, of course, a personalised wedding ceremony. Whether you just want a little bit of love story, or lots of laughs and tears, this is the package for you.

We can also pop in anything else that you might want to include, whether that be a reading, a ritual, or something else creative to make your ceremony extra special.

A typical wedding ceremony runs for about 25—30 minutes, starting from the moment I'm first on the mic to start with some housekeeping, to the moment when you two head victoriously back down the aisle at the end.

Read more about the Full Package [here](#).



## *The Midi Package*

The Midi Package includes Sidecar Ceremonies and Commitment Ceremonies. A Sidecar Ceremony, also called a Shared Ceremony, is when the couple opt to have one of their loved ones step in to perform as much of the ceremony as desired, with the celebrant mostly there to handle the legal components. Depending on how much of the ceremony the third party is writing and reading out on the day, this can mean a varied workload for the celebrant.



For a Sidecar Ceremony, I encourage the third party to join us at our in person meeting so that all four of us can discuss the ceremony and get on the same page.

A Commitment Ceremony is when the couple have decided not to get legally married, or have already gotten legally married, and so no paperwork or lodging of the marriage is required, but all of the other ceremony elements remain (eg. exchanging of rings, vows, I dos, love story).

Read more about the Midi Package [here](#).

## *The Purely Legals*

The Purely Legals Package is a straight-to-the-point ceremony—like going to the Registry Office, but we're probably standing somewhere a little bit nicer and I'll be speaking in my own words.

There's no love story component, an in-person meeting isn't necessary and all paperwork can be completed online together.



This will likely only take about 15-20 minutes, and will basically encompass a welcome, I dos, exchanging of vows & rings, signing of the register, the first kiss, and presentation of the newlyweds, as needed.

Please note that at least one month's notice is required in Victoria before you can legally get married. This involves filling out a Notice of Intended Marriage and your celebrant receiving it at least one month before your ceremony date.

Read more about the Purely Legals Package [here](#).

## *MC Duties*



I can stick around after your ceremony is over to MC your wedding if needed. This means I'll be the liaison between you and the venue, checking in to see how you two are going and helping to keep things running smoothly throughout the night, and announce over the mic whatever is needed throughout the wedding (housekeeping, reception entries, cake cutting, speeches, first dance, last drinks, etc.).

My MC vibe is low-key, warm and fairly straightforward: I'm on the mic as needed, and out of the way the rest of the time. I'm not bothering your guests or riffing just for the sake of it. If you want to include reception games, I'm down for this too!

This is priced per hour and begins at the end of the ceremony finish time. I can do as many or as few hours as needed.

Read more about MCing and other additional services [here](#).

# *What's the Process?*

## **Let's Chat**

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. We can do this over Zoom or on the phone, and I usually put aside 15-20 minutes for this.

## **Lock it In**

After we've had a chat, I'll leave it up to you to get back in touch with me if you'd like to go ahead together. At this point, I'll send through a Service Agreement for signing plus a 30% booking fee. I'll also send through the first bit of paperwork so that you can start getting this organised.

## **Six Month Check In & Meeting**

I'll reach out to you six months before your ceremony date (or sooner, if preferred) 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 (or the NOIM, the only bit of paperwork that needs to be filled in at least one month prior to your ceremony date). It's also a chance for us to get to know each other a little bit, and fill out my Ceremony Questionnaire together, which includes every question I can think to ask you about what you do and don't want included in your ceremony. I'll offer guidance and suggestions throughout this process. I will take care of every bit of paperwork along the way, and lodge your marriage for you with the Births, Deaths & Marriages office after your ceremony.

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.

## **Couples Questionnaire & Vows**

To write your ceremony, I'll need more info about the two of you and your love story! This is where my Couples Questionnaire comes in; fill it out individually in your own time, and get it back to me at least two weeks prior to your ceremony. You can also send me a copy of your personal vows if you'd like feedback or help with them, or for me to bring them along for you on the day.

## **Rehearsal or Final Zoom**

If your venue offers a wedding rehearsal, I'll always endeavour to be there if I'm free. If they don't, we could meet up somewhere local for a walk through in a park or backyard. Alternatively, we can have a final Zoom to go through the ceremony running order and clarify any final details together.

## **Wedding Ceremony**

I'll aim to arrive 30-45 minutes before your ceremony begins, get myself set up, say hello to you both, grab any final signatures that may be needed, and (obviously) solemnise your marriage! I'll leave your commemorative marriage certificate somewhere safe, and head off shortly after the ceremony is finished (hopefully with a hug goodbye first, but it's your wedding...you might be a lil bit busy).

# Order of the Ceremony

A ceremony can be tailored to you, but as far as a standard ceremony goes, the order may be as follows (the legal components are in bold):

- Housekeeping
- Processional (entering of parties)
- Welcome
- Couple's Love Story
- **Monitum** (celebrant authority paragraph)
- I Dos
- Personal Vows
- Exchanging of Rings & **Legal Vows**
- First Kiss
- **Signing of the Register**
- Presentation of Newlyweds & Recessional



Now, that all may seem like a lot, but it will fly by in less than halfa! If you'd like to include some kind of reading, I suggest popping it in after the Welcome, or perhaps while we're at the signing table. Rituals are often included before or after the vows.

## 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:

### 1. The Monitum

This is a fairly short legal statement that I must say word-for-word during a ceremony, before you and your witnesses, that declares me eligible to solemnise your marriage and outlines the nature of the marriage and relationship you're about to enter into.

### 2. Legal 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 also write and share your personal vows, which most couples opt to do, but you must say the above sentence. I like to pair it with the exchanging of rings to make it a bit more of a moment.

### 3. Signing the Register with Two Witnesses

During the ceremony (or before/after if preferred), 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. Please note that your witnesses must be over the age of 18. They may be a relative, friend or complete stranger (though it is preferable that they know you and can attest to your identity).

# Paperwork & Legal Requirements

Remember, I'll provide you with all of this paperwork and lodge your marriage for you. There are **two forms** that you will both need to fill out and sign *before* the ceremony can take place, and **three** that all of us will sign *at the wedding*:

## 1. 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. I will generally send this to couples to fill out the preliminary info ahead of our first meeting, and we can then sign it altogether in person. To fill out the NOIM, I must sight (digitally or in person) both of you:

- **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 AND a secondary form of ID that includes a photo such as a:**
  - Driver Licence/Learner Permit
  - Proof of Age/Photo card
  - Certificate of Australian citizenship plus another form of photographic evidence, such as a student card or other photo ID not listed above
- **If you have previously been married, evidence of last marriage ending** (divorce or death certificate)

## 2. Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage

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, *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 (eg. change of job or address). I usually bring this form along to the wedding rehearsal, or we can sign it on the wedding day, *before* the ceremony begins when I come to say hi to each of you.

## 3, 4 & 5. Signing of the Marriage Certificates

The final three forms will be signed during your wedding ceremony when we head to the signing table with your two witnesses. One is your commemorative marriage certificate that you get to keep, the other two are Official Certificates of Marriage (one I keep for my records, one I send to Births, Deaths & Marriages along with forms 1 and 2 to register your marriage).

## What other legal requirements are there for marriage in Australia?

You must both be over 18 years of age, or, if one person is under the age of 18 (but over the age of 16), marriage is still possible by parental consent as per section 12 of the Marriage Act. The ceremony must be witnessed by two people, both over the age of 18. Your celebrant does not count as a witness.

If you have questions about the legal requirements to a marriage (eg. wanting to get married with less than one month's notice, who else is authorised to witness a NOIM for you, one of you has a medical condition that makes speaking or signing challenging, etc.), please get in touch.



## *Help Writing Personal Vows*

I'm an experienced writer and have read MANY a vows in my time. As well as providing you with some example vows and writing prompts, I can take a look over your vows before the day to check them for length, content, grammar, spelling, appropriate balance of mushiness and comedy—whatever you want (not included for Purely Legals Package). This also ensures that I won't steal your thunder and say anything in the ceremony that you want to say in your vows.

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, thank yous, wishes, jokes...anything! If you two value your privacy, you may wish to read your vows to one another privately earlier on your wedding day, or write a letter to each other to open that morning instead. Some couples may include just a small section of their personal vows in their ceremony, and save the full version just for each other.

Typical vows may be around 250-300 words/two minutes, but any length goes! Whether it's literally three dot point sentences, or a two-page essay, the choice is yours.

## *Useful Links*

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

You can see a tiny bit of ceremony footage of me on YouTube [here](#).

You can read what my couples have said about me in my Google Reviews [here](#).

You can read more about getting married on the Births, Deaths & Marriages website [here](#).

