



Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants (Inc)

National President

National
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Monday, 11 May 1998

Dear Colleague Funeral Director/Arranger,

Guideline Fee for 1998—\$220 staying at this figure for the moment.

Twenty two years ago Funeral Directors experienced a prolonged period of vicious criticism. In the media and elsewhere they were consistently attacked for exploiting the bereaved at a time of maximum vulnerability. But when the "victims" were interviewed on television, their universal complaint was the lack of quality in the **preparation of the ceremony.**

I remember the period and the incidents very clearly. You are familiar with the kind of things - names wrong - facts wrong - inappropriate words etc This was not the fault of the funeral director at all - and lest anyone think I am attacking the clergy, I am not. Twenty two years ago they were the only people who officiated at funeral ceremonies - and they were forced to do the funerals for all, even those who professed not to believe in God.

And then, in this one place in the world, Victoria, a group of people set themselves up as a profession, to interview families carefully, prepare the words and music of the ceremony well, and check it painstakingly with the family to ensure that every word, every detail, was correct.

The group was originally named the *Funeral Celebrants Association* and is now the *Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants Inc.*

The Funeral Industry has been a significant beneficiary of this improvement in the quality of preparation and many of you have been

pleased to acknowledge our contribution.

The clergy have a difficulty here, as do we. They still live in the thought pattern that, supported by a congregation with car, salary, telephone etc. the stipend/fee for a congregation should be low. This in so many, perhaps most, cases is a fiction — but old habits die hard.

We also have to deal with the 'also rans' - those who do a quarter the job, half the job, three quarters the job you and I know should be done. They give satisfaction more or less according to people's expectations. Should we lower our standards to match their lower prices or should we stick to our principles?

Your own research has shown that **repeat business mainly comes to you** if families were satisfied with a previous ceremony.

You can say what you want, advertise how you like, dress up in whatever clothes you think look good, but the bottom line is this. **There is absolutely no short cut, no substitute for full interviewing, preparation and checking. This is 7-15 hours of very difficult and exacting work.**

In the long term then, if you want to maintain and improve your own market share, if you want complete professional satisfaction yourself, if you want repeat business, our members - *The Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants Inc.* - are the ones who pioneered this standard of preparation in the world and are the **only ones who guarantee that same standard** of genuine and compassionate preparation and delivery of which I speak.

I enclose our pamphlet. We ask you to display it and distribute it. (More copies available on request.) We ask you to continue to support our members.

With good wishes,

Kathy Hurley
National Vice-President and Acting Administrator