## STRENGTHENING YOUR MARRIAGE

### Before marriage: Marriage Education

Solid relationships set you up to meet the changes and challenges of life. It is important to develop good communication and sound relationship skills early, so that you can fall back on these skills during difficult times.

Pre-marriage education prepares couples for marriage by providing skills and information to build lifelong marriages. Courses are also available to explore the added dimension and complexity brought to a marriage by children from a previous relationship.

### During marriage: Family Counselling

Keeping relationships on track is not always easy. Relationship problems can arise at various stages of our lives. While having a shaky moment does not mean your relationship is in trouble, it may be a sign that you could do with some help.

Family counselling can help couples come to terms with the many changes that happen during a marriage, such as the personal and interpersonal issues to do with children and family. Family counsellors can help you work through emotional problems with your spouse or partner, or to reach agreement about your parental responsibilities.

### Marriage breakdown: Family Dispute Resolution

Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) can help separating couples to reach agreement about property, money, and—most importantly—any children. The law requires separating families who have a parenting dispute to make a genuine effort to try to sort it out through FDR.

An accredited FDR Practitioner can help you discuss issues, look at options, and reach agreement. Importantly, FDR can help you to develop a parenting plan to set out arrangements for any children.

**For more information about the services and advice available for couples and families, visit the Family Relationships Online website at www.familyrelationships.gov.au or phone the Family Relationship Advice Line on 1800 050 321.**

This information is provided pursuant to subsection 42(5A) of the *Marriage Act 1961*

# Happily Ever… Before and After

**INFORMATION FOR COUPLES PLANNING TO MARRY**



## MARRIAGE IS IMPORTANT

Your celebrant is handing you this document because the decision to marry is one of the biggest decisions a couple can make. Marriage is a significant step which will bring a number of changes for you, your spouse and your family. This document tells you:

- the process of getting married in Australia,
- some important legal consequences of getting married, and
- where relationship support services, such as marriage education, family counselling or dispute resolution services may be obtained.

## GETTING MARRIED IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, marriage is regulated by the *Marriage Act 1961*, which sets out the process for getting married and the legal requirements of a valid marriage.

1. A completed **Notice of Intended Marriage** form must be given to your celebrant at least one month (and up to 18 months) before the wedding.

2. You and your partner must provide your celebrant **with evidence of your date and place of birth, identity and the end of any previous marriages**.

3. You must both sign the 'Declaration of no legal impediment to marriage'. By signing the Declaration, you declare that you believe that you are of marriageable age, and that there is no legal impediment to your marriage.

4. On your **wedding day**, your celebrant will solemnise your marriage. Your celebrant will then ask you, your partner and your witnesses to **sign up to three marriage certificates**.

5. After your wedding, **your marriage celebrant will register the marriage** with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the State or Territory where your marriage took place.

## MARRIAGE IN AUSTRALIA: SOME IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Health and welfare benefits

If you receive health or welfare benefits, you will need to contact the relevant agencies to advise them that you have married. These agencies will advise you if your benefits will change. You may lose benefits and even be penalised if you fail to tell them you have married within a reasonable time after the wedding.

### Changing your name

Any person who marries may choose to take their spouse's surname. You are not legally required to take your spouse's surname once you are married.

If you wish to take your spouse's surname, you must obtain a certificate of marriage issued by your state or territory Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This is usually sufficient evidence to have your personal documentation (eg. driver's licence) changed to your married surname.

The certificate you received on your wedding day is ceremonial and will not meet the identity requirements of many government agencies, such as the passport office.

### Citizenship

If you marry an Australian citizen, you do not have an automatic right to Australian citizenship. You will still need to apply for citizenship and satisfy the eligibility criteria. You can obtain further information from the Department of Home Affairs website at www.homeaffairs.gov.au.

### Making a will

Marriage will invalidate any previous wills unless your will clearly shows you were planning this marriage when you made it.

It is important that you make a new will when your personal circumstances change. This ensures that you have a valid will that gives effect to your intentions about how you want your assets to be distributed in the event of your death. A solicitor can help you make or change a will.

### Taxation after marriage

When you marry, the amount of taxation you pay may change. It is advisable to contact the Australian Taxation Office, a tax agent or an accountant before marriage to discuss any tax implications.