

WHAT IS A REGISTRY CEREMONY?

A guide for couples to understand the criteria for a registry ceremony

The following checklist outlines what 'is' and what 'is not' a Registry Ceremony. Approved 'Registry Celebrants' are listed on the Births, Deaths & Marriages (BDM) website when you apply for your Registry Ceremony marriage licence. The registry celebrant must follow set criteria in officiating a 'Registry Ceremony' – outlined below.

If what you want does not tick all the right boxes, you need to discuss your needs for a personalised ceremony with your celebrant. It can still be very simple, but allows the celebrant to charge an appropriate fee for time and travel and allows you more choice as to the day, time and location.

- ✓ If you **CAN** tick all the bullet points below, it is a registry ceremony – go ahead.
- ✗ If you **CAN'T** – please discuss your needs for a personalised ceremony with your celebrant.

THE CRITERIA OF A REGISTRY CEREMONY:

- ✓ A registry ceremony is a simple, civil, legal ceremony with a fixed standard script and set vows.
- ✓ It should be held during business hours and excludes weekends and public holidays.
- ✓ Registry ceremonies cannot be booked in advance of the three-month licence period. If you (the couple) wish to do this, you need to book a personalised ceremony.
- ✓ Only you (the couple) can communicate with the registry celebrant regarding your ceremony date, time and venue, not other family members or friends.
- ✓ It can be officiated at your (the couple's) home, the celebrant's home/office or at another agreed location in the community. The venue must be within 10 – 15 minutes of the celebrant's home/work address.
- ✓ Maximum of 20 guests including the celebrant and 2 witnesses, although some celebrants or venues may limit the number of guests to even less.
- ✓ 30 minutes is allowed for both the ceremony and the administration – it is likely to take less time than that.
- ✓ You (the couple) do not meet the celebrant prior to the ceremony. You can expect to communicate with your celebrant by phone and/or email to confirm the date, time venue, script, inclusion of ring exchange and payment method. A registry ceremony is not personalised, so making the arrangements should be simple.
- ✓ You need to pay the \$90 fee to the celebrant in advance or in cash on the day – the celebrant will advise you of their preferred payment method & time frame.
- ✓ The celebrant cannot charge you (the couple) any additional fees, such as travel. This is not permitted in the provision of this simple, civil, legal service.
- ✓ You (the couple) need to provide proof of identity with photo identification (passport, drivers licences or other certified documentation).
- ✓ The ceremony is usually delivered in spoken English. Should you (the couple) require NZSL or prefer the Māori version, you will need to discuss this with the celebrant when booking the ceremony. You (the couple) are then required to provide an interpreter if the celebrant, couple or witnesses do not understand NZSL, Māori or English. The interpreter is required to sign the Declaration for translating a marriage or civil union ceremony.

It is NOT a registry ceremony when:

- ✗ There are photographers, videographers, music and installations which are typical features of a personalised ceremony. This was not permitted at the registry office or courthouse.
- ✗ A personalised ceremony needs to be booked if there are more than 20 guests and/or it is to be held at a wedding venue.
- ✗ It is scheduled to be held on a weekend or public holiday or more than three months in advance of the licence being issued.
- ✗ The celebrant must travel a significant distance. They cannot charge a travel fee, so if you are asking them to travel more than 10 – 15 minutes, you'll need to change to a personalised ceremony.

Other considerations

Booking your Celebrant

It is preferable to ring the celebrant to check they are available on the day and time you wish to be married (week days only, excluding weekends & public holidays).

Remember, you need to travel to the celebrant or check they are happy to travel a short distance to your location. Celebrants will identify their preference on their BDM listing.

Allow plenty of time on the day

It is important to be punctual. Celebrants do have other work and other clients and may not be able to officiate your ceremony if you are not on time. In busy city areas, do allow for traffic and ensure you, your guests and witnesses have arrived to the arranged venue at least 15 minutes early.

Changing over to a 'personalised ceremony'

You and your registry celebrant are limited by the above criteria for a registry ceremony. Discuss the style and tone of the ceremony you want with your celebrant. It may be that a personalised ceremony is required. In this case, your licence will be amended by the celebrant at no extra cost and you can agree an appropriate fee for service with your celebrant for a personalised ceremony.

If a registry ceremony is changed to a personalised ceremony, the celebrant will notify BDM of this change to ensure the 'type of ceremony' is recorded accurately.

Cancellation

If you (the couple) cancel within 24 hours of your booked time for a registry ceremony, the celebrant may keep the \$90 fee as they have held this time aside for you.