

# CIVIL UNIONS

*A ceremony to give formal recognition of a relationship between two people.*

Under the provisions of the **Civil Union Act 2004** (in force from 26 April 2005) it is now possible for two people to have their relationship formalised by entering into a **Civil Union**. A civil union can be performed for a same-sex couple, or a heterosexual couple.

An intending couple must be able to meet the legal requirements set out by law. This can be checked out at an office of the Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages. If all is in order then the couple can apply for their forms while they are at the office (see below\*).

A couple can be joined in a civil union by a Registrar of Civil Unions in a Registry Office, or they can have a ceremony solemnised by an authorised Civil Union Celebrant at a place other than a Registry Office.

The format of the ceremony is generally quite simple, but if you are having it performed by a celebrant it is possible to include a few more personal touches than when it is done in the Registry Office.

Celebrants such as those within our organisation will be able to assist couples who wish to design their own ceremonies.

It is necessary to point out however that there are certain things which are mandatory under law in a civil union ceremony, just as they are in a wedding ceremony.

All ceremonies performed by NZARH celebrants are non-religious in content, but they can contain suitable secular readings, and music can play an important part in the proceedings too.

You can get further details for obtaining your Civil Union Licence by phoning (toll free) 0800 22 52 52, or writing to:

## **Births Deaths & Marriages**

P O Box 10-526

Wellington

Email: [bdm.nz@dia.govt.nz](mailto:bdm.nz@dia.govt.nz)

\*However, below you will find some of the main points that may be of help to you.

**When a couple intends to enter into a civil union, they are required to complete the appropriate type of 'Notice of Intended Civil Union' form, which includes a statutory declaration that both parties are free to be joined in civil union and that all the details supplied on the form are correct.**

**These forms are available from Births Deaths & Marriages offices and agencies, and the web site [www.bdm.govt.nz](http://www.bdm.govt.nz).**

**One of the parties must appear in person before the Registrar of Civil Unions to sign the statutory declaration.**

**The required fee must be paid. (This is the fee for the licence. It does not cover the performance of the ceremony either at the Registry Office or by an independent registered celebrant.)**

**The Registrar will (not sooner than three days after receiving the civil union notice) issue your Civil Union Licence, together with two copies of a document known as a 'Copy of Particulars of Civil Union'.**

**You will need to deliver these documents to your Civil Union Celebrant at least two days prior to the ceremony.**

Therefore it is better that you arrange for the services of a celebrant prior to applying for your papers. The Registrar will most likely want to know who is going to take your ceremony anyway.

**As already stated, the Civil Union Act 2004 does not prescribe any set form for the ceremony, but the following elements are essential.**

**Your civil union must be solemnised at one of the places stated on your Civil Union Licence, and before the licence expires. (Wedding licences are usually good for three months after the date of issue, and it is intended that civil union licences will be the same.) The expiry date always appears on the licence form.**

The civil union must be solemnised in the presence of either a Civil Union Celebrant, or a Registrar of Civil Unions.

The ceremony must be performed in the presence of at least two other witnesses. Each party must make a clear statement to the other that names both parties and acknowledges that they are freely joining in a civil union with each other.

The couple, the celebrant and the witnesses must *all* sign both copies of the Copy of Particulars of Civil Union.

Anyone old enough to understand what occurs at the ceremony can be a witness, as long as they are of sound mind, and not intoxicated.

Once the papers are signed, the civil union is legal and binding, and your celebrant will see that the couple get a signed copy of the Particulars of Civil Union, and also forward the other onto the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Our celebrant service is self-supporting, so there is a reasonable donation required for the performance of any ceremonies, which is paid on the day.

The NZARH has a long and respected record of providing non-religious, but meaningful ceremonies to the people of New Zealand. We are proud to have been supporters of the legislation that made Civil Unions become a reality, and to now

be able to include them as a part of our service to the wider community.

If you have any questions, or you require the services of a celebrant, please contact our Celebrant Service (09) 622 1400, and speak to our coordinator, Peter Hansen.

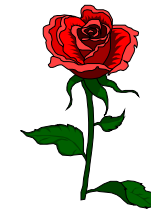
NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION  
OF RATIONALISTS & HUMANISTS (Inc.)  
*Serving NZ's non-religious community since 1927*  
Rationalist House, 64 Symonds Street, Auckland 1001  
Telephone: (09) 373 5131, Facsimile: (09) 379 8233  
Mobile: 0274 838 047, Celebrant Service: (09) 622 1400  
E-mail: [heathen@nzarh.org.nz](mailto:heathen@nzarh.org.nz)  
Web site: [www.nzarh.org.nz](http://www.nzarh.org.nz)

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# THE NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF RATIONALISTS & HUMANISTS (Inc.)



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