

A WORD ABOUT THE SERVICES OFFERED BY OUR ASSOCIATION

NON-RELIGIOUS WEDDINGS

Following submissions from the NZ Rationalist Association and others, the Marriage Act was amended in 1976 to provide for secular marriages performed by civil celebrants. Previously weddings could only be conducted by ministers of religion, and those wanting a non-religious service had to rely on local registrars and postmasters.

The Association has nominated civil marriage celebrants in Auckland and other major centres who are on the official list of the Department of Internal Affairs.

Our celebrants are authorised to conduct weddings from 6.00 am to 10.00 pm on any day of the week and in any public or private place of the parties' own preference. The Marriage Act does not stipulate any special form of marriage ceremony, and the Association's celebrants conduct secular weddings entirely at the wishes of the parties.

Any couples interested in a non-religious wedding may contact (09) 622 1400.

NON-RELIGIOUS NAMING CEREMONIES

Any parents wishing to arrange a naming ceremony for their child may also contact (09) 622 1400.

NON-RELIGIOUS FUNERALS

Death is a traumatic experience for the bereaved family and it is impossible not to be affected by the circumstances.

Many people are not aware that a funeral service may be conducted by anyone - it is not required that a minister of religion perform this duty.

Our service is designed to give dignity to the occasion, and sympathy to the bereaved family. It is built around the life and activities of the deceased person. The family may have special requests which are always carried out to the best of our ability.

Anyone wishing to arrange a non-religious funeral service may telephone (09) 622 1400 at any time.

HONORARY ASSOCIATES

Gianni Bartocci	Bernard Howard
H James Bix	Paul Kurtz
Raymond Bradley	Lavanam
Steve Cooper	Derek Lawden
Richard Dawkins	Richard Leakey
Warwick Don	Timothy Madigan
Zoë During	Michael Martin
Denis Dutton	Taslima Nasrin
Sanal Edamaruku	Jean-Claude Pecker
Brian Edwards	Ian Plimer
Antony Flew	Anwar Shaikh
Levi Fragell	Yunis Sheikh
Ida Gaskin	Barbara Smoker
Maurice Gee	Dame Catherine Tizard
Dame Barbara Goodman	David Tribe
Finngeir Hiorth	Ibn Warraq
Lewis Wolpert	

**N.Z. ASSOCIATION OF
RATIONALISTS & HUMANISTS (Inc.)
Established 1927
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Celebrant Service: (09) 622 1400
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Cover photo: Rationalist House, 64 Symonds Street, Auckland. Originally built in 1912 as a local doctor's residence and surgery, and purchased by our Association in 1960. This historic building was declared a Heritage Site by the Auckland City Council in 1997.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF RATIONALISTS & HUMANISTS



**SERVING NEW ZEALAND'S
NON-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY
SINCE 1927**

THE OBJECTS OF THE N.Z. ASSOCIATION OF RATIONALISTS & HUMANISTS ARE:

- ***To advocate a rational, humane, and secular view of life without reference to supernatural agencies and which is compatible with the scientific method.***
- ***To promote a tolerant, responsible, and open society.***
- ***To encourage open-minded enquiry into matters relevant to human co-existence and well-being.***

What would Sir Dove-Myer Robinson, Sir Robert Stout, John A Lee (politicians), A R D Fairburn, R A K Mason (writers and poets), Sir James Shelley, and Sir T A Hunter (academics) have in common? Very little, except that they were all members of the NZ Association of Rationalists & Humanists. This organisation has been going without a break since 1927. So, what's it done in all that time?

In New Zealand, Rationalism was first established in Dunedin in 1878. The foundation stone of its Freethought Hall was laid by Sir Robert Stout, a Chief Justice and Prime Minister of New Zealand, who was a leading member of the movement.

The Auckland Rationalist Association was formed in 1927, and established a journal entitled *The Truth Seeker*. The first issue was dated 3 July 1927, priced at 3 pence. It was well received and sold rapidly. Monthly meetings were held at the Majestic Theatre. They proved an immediate success, attracting audiences of up to 2000.

The Association came to prominence by defending state schools from over-zealous religionists desperate to have their brand of Christianity shoved down everyone's throat. The

Association also campaigned to free up Sundays in a way we now take for granted. In the 1920s there were the sorts of killjoy who actually thought it beneficial for the spiritual welfare of children that their playgrounds and swings in public parks be chained up on Sunday. Permits were needed - and usually refused - to show a film or to have a game of rugby or bowls on a Sunday. The Rationalist Association was prosecuted - twice - for screening films on Sundays.

During the Second World War, the Association campaigned for the civil liberties of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who had been banned by the government because they were thought to be a threat to the war effort. We also advocated the rights of conscientious objectors, even though the Rationalists themselves were overwhelmingly in favour of pursuing the war effort vigorously. Rationalists have often supported the 'underdog' when they themselves have been subjected to persecution.

After the war, it was our turn to be persecuted - again. This time it was for distributing sex literature! The material, called *The Journal of Sex Education*, wouldn't raise an eyebrow today. Among the more terrible pieces of advice in this journal was that sexual problems could be caused by stress and by feelings of having to be more than what you are. What would seem common-place today was subversive in 1953, and again the Association paid the price for being ahead of its time.

In 1960 the Association purchased its present headquarters at 64 Symonds Street in Auckland, from where we have continued our activities. In recent years we have fought for abortion rights, voluntary euthanasia, and the strict separation of church and state. We have also opposed the discriminatory use of public funds to sponsor

specific religious events, such as a Christmas nativity scene that was erected by the Auckland City Council at the expense of Auckland's ratepayers.

From the very beginning the Association has sponsored academics and speakers to visit the country to speak on issues of current importance. Visitors in recent years have included the American conjuror **James Randi**, the Australian geologist **Ian Plimer**, and the British psychologist **David Marks**.

The Association holds monthly meetings with guest speakers and discussions on topics relevant to Rationalism and Humanism. We have worked with the Auckland University Atheist Club since its establishment in 1990, and in 1999 we instituted an annual scholarship at the University of Auckland. Our Executive Council meets monthly to conduct the Association's administrative affairs. Our journal, now called *The Open Society*, is published quarterly. Members also receive our monthly newsletter and have access to the Len Beckett Memorial Library - the largest collection of freethought literature in the southern hemisphere. 1998 saw the publication of the official history of the Association, *Heathen in Godzone: Seventy Years of Rationalism in New Zealand*.

The NZ Association of Rationalists & Humanists has always tried to protect the freedoms of all people by preserving the best guarantee of that freedom: a secular state that shows no favour to any system of belief.

Members receive our quarterly journal, monthly newsletter, voting rights, and library access as part of their annual subscription.

*Individuals \$35.00;
Students/ Superannuitants/Beneficiaries \$15.00;
Household \$40.00; Overseas \$40.00.*