

couples contact me with the main emphasis on how much I charge, rather than the importance and quality of the vows and commitment they are making to one another in the ceremony. Couples in Australia spend an average of \$51,000 on their wedding day.

**Can you share some "behind the scenes" humorous moments or bloopers?**

At one wedding held on a family hinterland property, the bride's father had built a stunning deck and stage especially for the wedding which overlooked the big dam. There were lights, flowers, a marquee, musicians – everything was looking perfect. Unfortunately, during the ceremony one of the bridesmaids almost fell through part of the decking that wasn't secured properly, and with dad looking on horrified in the front row. I had to surreptitiously move the bridal party away from the danger zone!

**What is the most interesting request you've had from a bride and groom?**

One of the funniest requests was from a couple who wanted me to marry them in their pyjamas! They were hard-working parents and it wasn't often they could sleep in or lie around relaxing in PJs. They also believed their marriage was not about the clothes they wore, but the vows they were making. They wanted their ceremony to be completely "chilled" so an intimate, early morning ceremony was arranged with the family in their PJs!

**What's the best advice you've ever received about relationships and who did it come from?**

My dad. I was a headstrong and rebellious teenager who loved to travel and explore not only places, but thoughts and beliefs. My dad once said to me 'Never forget your roots.' At the time, I didn't appreciate the meaning of his profound words. Eventually I came to

understand the importance of where I came from and why I am the person I am.

**Technology continues to entertain and challenge couples. Have you noticed any other testing trends as we surge on into 2018?**

FIFO couples face enormous challenges to their relationships. The tyranny of distance wreaks havoc with families who live apart for so much time. Developing a sense of place within FIFO families is extremely difficult especially for the partner working away.

**What bridal or ceremony trends have you observed to now?**

The influx of social media has brought another element to wedding ceremonies. It's not unusual for guests to be snapping away with phones and iPads and even posting wedding details to Facebook etc. while the couple are still taking their vows! I now offer my couples an 'unplugged ceremony' where I politely ask guests to put away their cameras and phones and be totally present.

**I find that flourishing, successful couples seem to feature two very unscientific words being, respect and kindness. Would you add any additional key words?**

Date nights are very popular these days. Although spending dedicated time together is important, couples need to trust one another, have a sense of humour, see the glass as half full, rather than half empty.

**How do you unwind and separate work from your personal life?**

I don't see my work as a celebrant as purely 'work'. I am a people person and love what I do. It's just as much a part of my personal life as my professional life. Being a celebrant is working with loved-up couples. What more could you want? Some of my couples remain friends and keep in contact with me from all over the world. It's an honour to be asked to perform other



ceremonies at critical milestones in their lives. Many of my friends are also part of the wedding scene here on the coast so my work is never far from my social life either.

**What are your goals for this year?**

To balance my celebrant business more equally with my family, friends and myself. I also want to indulge in things that I love – books, flowers, massage, cooking and champagne!

**What is your favourite romantic destination?**

There are so many romantic destinations in the world. To be honest, I can't think of anything better than enjoying delicious food and a bottle of wine with Graham, sitting on our deck in candlelight. I often choose this option rather than going out for dinner!

**Graham, what do you appreciate about Jacqui the most?**

I love Jacqui's dedication to her clients and devotion to her family. She has a great passion for social justice issues and the environment. She's also a great cook!

**Jacqui, what do you appreciate about Graham the most?**

Graham is caring and incredibly loyal. We laugh together and have lots of crazy, fun times. He is my right hand at weddings and I totally depend on him when I have any computer/technical difficulties. His patience and determination balances my fiery Leo personality!

*Joanne is a neuro-psychotherapist and relationship specialist at The Confidante Counselling. Email jo@theconfidantecounselling.com or visit www.theconfidantecounselling.com*

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