

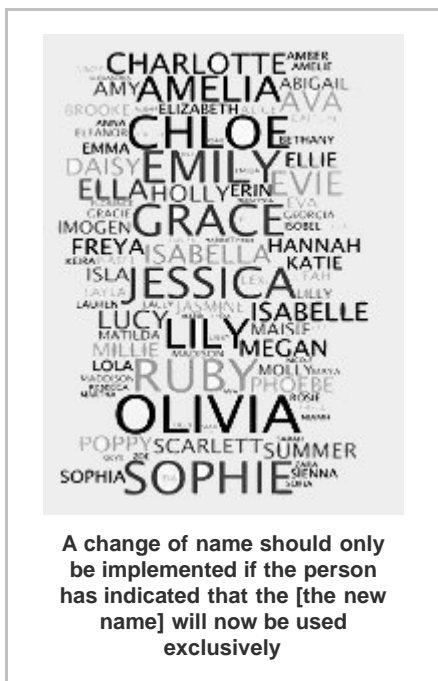
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Changing Your Name with Centrelink

Not a Problem After All

by Katherine Cummings

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Recently a friend came to me who was having a problem with changing her name at Centrelink. Apparently the staff at Centrelink were unwilling to change my friend's Centrelink identity without her providing them with her reason for doing so.

... you can use any name you like ... provided the name is not blasphemous, seditious, libellous, obscene or unpronounceable (e.g. &%\$!%).*

This seemed unreasonable to me so I phoned Centrelink and, as is the way of the world these days, found myself chatting with an Information Consultant based in Geelong. We had a civil conversation and she verified the ground rules for changing one's name at Centrelink.

You are probably aware that in normal life you can use any name you like as long as you do so without intent to defraud, and provided the name is not blasphemous, seditious, libellous, obscene or unpronounceable (e.g. &%\$*!%). It is easier for legal purposes (e.g. if you want to use the new name on legal documents like passports) if you do this through the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages but it is legal simply to sign a Statutory Declaration in front of a J.P. and then show the Statutory Declaration to anyone who needs to record your new name. Centrelink, however, provided the following guidelines:

Change of Name: A change of name should only be implemented if the person has indicated that the name will now be used exclusively in dealings with the Department and

there is no indication that the new name is intended to deceive the Department. (They don't mean you have to keep one name just for your dealings with Centrelink and nobody else. They mean that you should only use one name in your dealings with Centrelink. The literacy failings of modern bureaucracy ...)

If there is doubt that a change of name should be implemented, further evidence of the intention to use the new name should be sought. This may include a change of name from Births, Deaths & Marriages, a newspaper advertisement or notification to such agencies as a bank, medical fund, employer or motor registry. With certain exceptions a person may adopt any name they wish and not retain their birth name. Generally a person gives effect to a change of name by using it in all circumstances. There is no requirement for a change of name to be registered with a Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, however this would be one method of demonstrating the intention to adopt a new name.

There was more, but I have given you the essence.

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