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This 'notebook' is very full indeed. Actually it's rather a fat 'notebook' and in no way sketchy as one might expect from the title. Anna speaks of being an 'apprentice to the form' and takes us on a tour of the genesis of civil celebrancy in Australia, her movement into it, the value of ceremony in acknowledging the 'rites of passage' and the positive impact it can have at a personal and public level.

Vignettes illuminate the depth and breadth of Anna's process and the personal growth and wellbeing that can result through participation in ceremonial co-production. We gain an understanding of her ceremonial leadership practice. Examples of questions used in the planning process demonstrate how openings may be created which offer people a chance for life review, deepening their appreciation of life transition through exploration and acknowledgement of their experiences and as such assist them to move forward, to transition.

As a palliative care worker this notebook has reminded and encouraged me to engage more fully in conversations about the value of good ceremonies; ceremonies which have the capacity to impact positively and in some cases transformatively on the lives of those who are dying and on the lives of those they leave behind. I say this as increasingly, it seems, funeral ceremonies are eschewed by those who are dying for fear that they will merely cause more pain and distress to those they love and then of course there is the cost.

As an antidote to this trend Anna invites us to consider the importance of engaging a 'simpatico' ceremonial leader who will guide, challenge and assist people to develop a meaningful ceremony which may then act as a bridge to the 'new place.' I would comfortably direct people to vignettes in the Notebook to assist with their consideration of a ceremony of some kind.

I am heartened by Anna's description of a ceremonial leader as someone who is able to be a companion in grief, and have the courage to speak of the pain and the truths so that they can be acknowledged. Her vignettes unfold and demonstrate in an easy way that through ceremony the personal becomes public and that the courage of being public with our shame and grief has a ripple effect, enabling others to connect with themselves and heal.

I found myself reflecting on my own experience of death with family and friends. How we dealt with it or not, the complexity of catering for disparate needs at funerals before and after, how we may have done things differently and how I may do things in the future.

Anna's Notebook is thought provoking and a welcome contribution to the current conversation on death and dying which thankfully continues to grow. A colleague has a t-shirt which reads "Spoiler alert. We are all going to die," and while death remains inescapable to us, the 'fat' little Notebook is a worthy read in the meantime.