



# An Unconventional Wedding

WORDS: TEGAN LYON

The planning and coordination of a wedding is a thrilling time for engaged couples. As any couple entering this phase of their relationship will tell you, there is a whole host of meticulous, unseen details that go into executing one of the most important days of your life. As life is not without its personal and financial hardships, some couples do not have the privilege of building their wedding from scratch. Collaborating with *Melbourne Wedding & Bride*, Enchanted Elopements granted one deserving couple the opportunity to elope at the 2019 Wedding & Bride Bridal Expo.

The competition sprang from a humble idea; to give back to a couple who needed it. Enchanted Elopements pitched the idea to the team at *Melbourne Wedding & Bride* back in April and the competition was publicised a few months later. Enchanted Elopement received numerous heartfelt entries, but Ashley and Joshua's story left an instant mark on the team, and they couldn't imagine a more worthy couple.

## THE GOLDEN TICKET

When they first met, Ashley was Joshua's boss, but it wasn't long before their feelings evolved into something deeper. Joshua used Ashley's birthday as the perfect cover to pop the question – whisking her away on a romantic picnic where he asked her to be his wife. Ashley and Joshua planned to have their wedding last year, but Joshua suffered an unfortunate accident at work, which resulted in a loss of income for the couple. Following a major operation on his leg, Joshua required months of expensive physical rehab. The couple was heartbroken to postpone their wedding, but

couldn't fathom such a grand expense in the near future. Ashley and Joshua entered the *Wedding & Bride* express elopement contest on a whim and were stunned when they were announced as the winning couple at the end of August.

## THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Once the winning couple was announced, Enchanted Elopements took charge of the planning and styling of the wedding, liaising with suppliers and Ashley and Joshua on a frequent basis. The team had approximately six weeks to produce Ashley and Joshua's wedding – a challenge that they approached with gusto.

Spearheaded by creative director Helen Williamson, Enchanted Elopements is a collective of wedding industry professionals that offer their combined experience to couples seeking an affordable, stress-free wedding. Equivalent to \$10,000, the expo elopement package included 20 guests, a two-hour reception, one-night's accommodation, and of course, the venue. Ashley and Joshua exchanged their own rings, but every other aspect of the wedding – from the gown to the photography – was donated by vendors participating in the bridal expo.

Even for professionals, planning a wedding in less than two months required detail-oriented planning, exceptional organisation, and a huge team effort. As with any wedding, the venue needed to be styled and set-up, florals and bouquets arranged, catering organised, music, photography – the works! Enchanted Elopements kept Ashley and Joshua well-informed during every step of the way, corresponding via text, phone and email, without any inkling of stress placed on the couple. The team worked tirelessly toward one specific goal; to give Ashley and Joshua an unforgettable experience that they would treasure forever.

## LEGALLY WED

There was a buzz of excitement in the air on the final day of the October bridal expo. Ashley and Joshua's wedding garnered a huge crowd of onlookers hoping to catch a peek at the bride and groom. Most attendees had to watch Ashley and Joshua's entire ceremony to believe it was a real wedding, rather than a fun stunt for the brides- and grooms-to-be attending the expo. Having been a licenced celebrant for six years, Helen timed the competition announcement to guarantee that there was a minimum of 30 days between lodging the couple's Notification of Intention to Marry and the actual ceremony. Helen also met with Ashley and Joshua several days prior to the wedding to sign other necessary documentation to ensure the entire process was completely legal.

## THE DRESS

For many brides-to-be, finding the perfect dress is one of the highlights of wedding planning, but in Ashley's case, the dress found her. Ashley had been nervous about finding the right dress in such a short timeframe, but Miss Bella Bridal went above and beyond to get Ashley the dress of her dreams. Ashley didn't know it, but the dress almost didn't make it in time! The dress experienced several shipping delays, and got stuck in New South Wales during transit. Miss Bella Bridal's Sydney supplier personally travelled to collect the dress and had it couriered to the Boronia store in Melbourne. The dress arrived on Thursday at midday, three days before the ceremony. Ashley had her first and only fitting that same day and walked out with the dress on Friday. Any hidden mishaps were worth it for the look on Joshua's face when he finally saw Ashley in her gown.

## WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY...

Even within the parameters of the express wedding and the hundreds of attendees at the bridal expo, Enchanted Elopements wanted to ensure that Ashley and Joshua felt like every second of their wedding belonged to them.

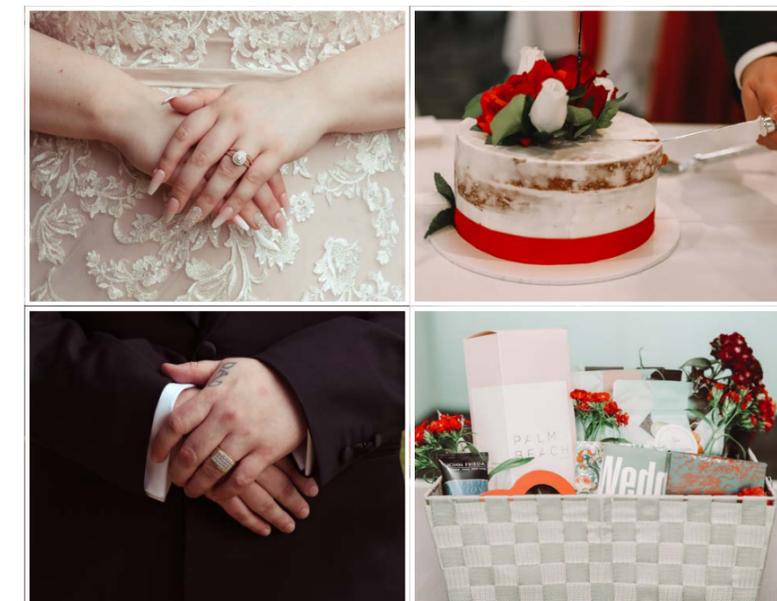
The day started early for Ashley, arriving at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre at nine o'clock with her mother and bridesmaid for hair and makeup. Joshua arrived promptly at midday with his best man, nervous but excited. The ceremony was due to start at one o'clock and at the very last

minute, Ashley's grandmother snuck her ring over to Helen to give to Ashley as her 'something borrowed'. Ashley cried when Helen gave her the ring. Ashley wasn't the only person moved to tears – Joshua had the same reaction when she walked down the aisle.

Ashley and Joshua were as thrilled with their reception as they were with their ceremony. Helen and her team delighted the couple with a surprise photobooth, bomboniere and stunning photographs. It was an unconventional set-up, but Ashley and Joshua couldn't have been happier with the opportunity to finally celebrate their love for one another.

## WHEN LUCK STRIKES TWICE

Ashley and Joshua may have been the first couple to be married at a bridal expo, but they won't be the last! *Melbourne Wedding & Bride* and Enchanted Elopements are thrilled to announce that another lucky couple will have the chance to elope at the 6th Annual Wedding & Bride Bridal Expo in October 2020. Follow *Melbourne Wedding & Bride* online for competition details closer to date.



## Wedding File

- Competition and Reception: Melbourne Wedding & Bride, Kew | 03 9853 2822
- Event Coordination: Enchanted Elopements, Blackburn | 0414 019 809
- Venue: Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, South Wharf | 03 9235 8000
- Celebrant: Marry Me Helley, Blackburn | 0425 865 456
- Event Styling: All 4 Divas, Craigieburn & Ashwood | 0402 460 385
- Bridal Gown & Bridesmaids' Dresses: Miss Bella Bridal, Boronia | 03 9762 6595
- Suits: Mens Suit Warehouse, Abbotsford | 03 9428 4151
- Bridal Flowers: Basia Puchalski Floral Design, Richmond | 0403 257 060
- Artificial Flowers: CeeDee Flowers, Craigieburn | ceedeeflowers@gmail.com
- Cake: Bon Appe-Sweet, South Morang | 0411 053 184
- Photography: Sare Clarke Photography, Melbourne | @sareclarkephotography
- Photobooth: Phototainment Booth, Bentleigh | 0413 240 700
- Stationery: Click Celebrations, Cheltenham | 0412 155 230
- Bridal Hair & Makeup: Teighan Lee Hair & Makeup, Narre Warren | 0488 099 800
- Bridesmaids Hair & Makeup: Tamarua Beauty Academy, Altona | 0421 864 557
- Entertainment: Matt Jeffries Entertainment, Epping | 0411 587 506
- Wine Gift: Massaros Winery, Kangaroo Ground | 03 9712 0548
- Personalised Gifts: Willow & Hutch, Berwick | willowandhutch@hotmail.com
- Marketing: Web Marketing Angels, Narre Warren | 03 9038 8663

weddingandbrideexpo.com.au  
Images: Sare Clarke Photography