



BCV Newsletter

May 2006

The Buddhist Council of Victoria is the representative organisation for Buddhist temples, dharma centres and groups in Victoria. It promotes understanding of Buddhism within the wider Australian community. The BCV Newsletter is issued annually.

Highlights:

- BCV at Commonwealth Games p.2
- Kalachakra Initiation at Amaravati p.4

Our Plans for 2006 – From the Chair

The 10th Annual General Meeting (AGM) was a memorable event with many guests and VIPs attending. Nineteen member delegates attended this very important AGM. An election was held and consequently a few new faces were elected to the official positions in the management committee. The incoming committee and I wish to thank the outgoing Chairperson, Mr Brian Ashen and committee members for their hard work during the previous years and we look forward to a very productive and exciting year for the Buddhist communities in Victoria.

In a meeting after the AGM, the committee discussed plans to implement new directions in the areas of youth affairs and public relations. In

September we are planning to initiate a program together with Melbourne City Council to commemorate the 2550 years since the birth of Buddha Sakyamuni. We are also revamping the BCV website to reflect our mission and purpose. Buddhist Education in Victorian Schools (BEVS) remains a key program with more schools and classes for 2006. Judith Macdonald has done an excellent job and will continue to run this program. Prison chaplaincy is being strengthened under the guidance of Michael Wells and Libby Shields. I hope to make time over the coming months to visit your temples and communities to discuss and listen to your comments and ideas on how to manage our ever-expanding community.

From the Chair – cont.

I represent the Dharma Drum Mountain centre from Taiwan and its founder, Venerable Chan master, Sheng Yen. He inspires wholesome thoughts with his vision of uplifting the character of humankind and building a pure land on earth. The missions and visions of our member associations no doubt will also inspire great depths in the understanding of the Dharma.

I hope to bring all of these ideals together so that we all work towards a common goal.

A tea party might be an ideal setting in which to bring all members together in an informal manner to improve our networking as well as our mutual understanding of each other's needs and aspirations.

Yours in Dharma
 Laura Chan, Dharma Drum Mountain Chair, Buddhist Council of Victoria
 Email : <chair@bcvic.org.au>

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BCV helps out at the Commonwealth Games

Over a period of 3 weeks, chaplains, counsellors and volunteers from four major faiths offered support to 4,500 athletes, officials and workers at the 18th Commonwealth Games Athletes Village Religious Services Centre (RSC). The Buddhist room was supported by three sangha - Ven Santhindriya, Ven Wimalananda and Ven. Chi Kwang. They were assisted by Buddhist counsellor and room convener Brian Ashen. The 'Village' was abuzz with elite athletes from 71 countries. There were also a couple of 'no-shows' from British PM Tony Blair and USA's Condeleza Rice. . The biggest moment was a visit from HRH Prince Phillip, while HRM Queen Elizabeth was outside the door have a

stroll down the street. Prince Phillip showed great interest in the Religious Service Centre and was introduced to all chaplains, counsellors and volunteers present. Brian Ashen showed Prince Phillip the Buddhist room. His Royal Highness looked in and remarked that it seemed a little quiet. Brian gave some Buddhist advice, "They come and they go Your Highness, they come and they go." After Prince Phillip left us the whole staff of the RSC ran out the door to get a glimpse of the Queen. *Many thanks to organisations who helped with resources. The Kagyu Evam Institute, Seon Centre, BLIA, Dharma Drum Mountain, North Victorian Buddhist Assoc, Buddhist Vihara of Victoria and the Buddhist Council of Victoria.*

Brian Ashen

The Buddhist Council - In service to the Buddhist Communities of Victoria

Chaplaincy to Buddhist Prisoners in Victoria

The BCV has been running a program of chaplaincy to Buddhist prisoners since 2002 after being approached by CORE, the public correctional organization, to initiate the service.

Prisoners from the Buddhist faith constitute only a small percentage of the total prison population, approximately 2%: or around 200 prisoners. The chaplaincy project has been managed as a sub-committee of the BCV, with Libby Shields as the co-ordinator, and with the assistance of several member temples. Thubten Shedrup Ling (Tibetan) has

provided a service to Loddon and Ararat, Dr Tashi from the Drolkar Buddhist Centre (Tibetan) has assisted Barwon, Jikishoan (Japanese) has assisted Port Philip and Deer Park. The Quang Minh Temple (Vietnamese), Fo Guang Shan (Chinese), the Soen Centre (Korean) and other Vietnamese and Cambodian monks, nuns and translators have also made contributions. Where possible prisoners are provided with Sangha members from their own communities. If that is not possible, then an appropriate translator is provided.

Launch of Victorian Buddhist Heritage Book

We would like to thank George Lekakis, President of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VCM) for his support of the Buddhist Council. It has been a multi-faceted support over many years.

At our AGM this year George launched the new publication, 'Profile and Contribution of Buddhists in Victoria'. This was funded by the VCM to the tune of \$6000. It was written and researched by Dr Shiva Vasi who we contacted through Monash University's Faculty of Arts, School of

Political and Social Inquiry. Thank you Professor Gary Bouma!

Professor Bouma, Vice-Chair of the World Conference on Religions for Peace, Malcolm Thomas, President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, as well as representatives from the Victorian Council of Churches, the Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria and the Australian Multicultural Foundation, joined us at the launch and the AGM. Thank you for being a part of our celebration.



Why We Need the Buddhist Education Program

For almost two years the BCV Religious Instruction in Primary Schools Program has been offering Buddhist teaching to more than 200 children in mainstream government primary schools. Students from the ages of 7 to 12 have the choice of attending 30 minutes a week where they hear stories of the Buddha, the Jataka Tales, learn meditation and how Buddhism is applied to life in today's chaotic world. The response has been overwhelming – we cannot meet the demand because of lack of resources of people and funds. Unlike other religious programs in schools, we are committed to providing the dhamma freely so do not charge for the classes. And unlike other programs, we are new and young with no established infrastructure. But our commitment and belief in the value of offering Buddhist Religious Instruction is strong.

The world today is a disturbed and confusing place for many children, both those from a Buddhist background and those who are not. Some are experiencing the upheaval of moving from a familiar culture to a completely new and different one; many lose their religious and cultural roots in this transition. Others face family instability.

Education Program continued ...

Without the possibility of taking Buddhism to the younger generation of all backgrounds, not only the Buddha's precious teaching but a whole culture and religion could possibly be lost. It is the responsibility of the present adult generation to ensure that this does not happen. Establishing a Buddhist community in a new place is a challenging and expensive exercise but without the young people of today, who will fill these temples in the years to come? Or will they be places of cultural and social interest instead of vibrant Dhamma centres?

2006 is the BCV Education Program's Year of Consolidation! Unless the material and volunteer support for Buddhist Religious Instruction can be taken up seriously by the Victorian Buddhist community it will fade away.

Some are experiencing the upheaval of moving from a familiar culture to a completely new and different one; many lose their religious and cultural roots in this transition. Others face family instability. We are all working too much and too fast. How do we live with a rapidly changing world? Last year we were all touched by the powerful destruction of a natural event- the tsunami. Climate change and dwindling resources are impacting on our lives. Whilst on a political and social level, peaceful co-existence and respect for human life is disappearing. Impermanence and unsatisfactoriness are all around us but few see this as just part of existence and so suffer because of delusion and unhappiness.

Buddhism offers the skills, insights and compassion to deal with the world and to live in harmony and personal contentment, now and in the future. At the Education Program we see our role as planting seeds that may not ripen for years to come but still are there. One day the skill of meditation or something a teacher said or the compassion that was shown in a Buddhist class may come to mind and change the course of events.

The pilot program has proven that there is an overwhelming demand for it. We are calling on all Buddhist communities with a concern for the youth of today and the leaders of the future to support us in all possible ways.

During this year the BCV Education Program will be asking you to assist with fund-raising and on-going support. Please help us to help the future of Buddhism in the world.

Judith Macdonald
Co-ordinator, BCV Education Program

Council Website

We have just updated our website!

We are now offering new information and a new format at

www.bcvic.org.au

We have over 40 members and we welcome new members. Send us an application! If you are a current member, have you paid your fee in 2006? We rely on your contribution to continue our work. Membership is a commitment to the Buddhists of Victoria. Fees are \$55 for full membership and \$27.50 for Friends. Post cheque or money order to Buddhist Council of Victoria



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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.bcvic.org.au

Ancient Chinese Poem Kalachakra Amaravati 06

Looking for but Not Finding the Recluse of West Peak

On the mountain top: one
thatched hut, thirty *li* from roads.

Knock on the door: no disciple to
answer;
look in: only a table for tea.

The firewood cart is covered;
have you gone fishing in the
autumn stream?

I look among the pools, but miss
you;
I try but fail to pay you my
respects.

Grass shines in the fresh rain;
pines murmur at evening
windows.

Here at this moment a harmony,
profound and unrivaled;
the self completely cleansed, the
heart, the ear.

Although there is no guest or
host as such,
I'm able to intuit your pure
thought.

Purpose fulfilled, I head back
down the mountain –
no need now to wait for you.

Taken from *Where the World Does
Not Follow, Buddhist China in Picture
and Poem*, translated and introduced
by Mike O'Connor, photography by
Steven R. Johnson, published by
Wisdom Publications, Boston, p. 49.

The Kalachakra initiation is one of the great events of the Tibetan community in exile. Every few years His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives the initiation to a crowd of around 100,000 people in India. While more famous sites in India such as Bodhgaya have been chosen in the past, this year in January Amaravati was picked because of its legendary association with the original teaching of the tantra. The state government of Andhra Pradesh upgraded the roads, water, electricity, drainage and provided thousands of tents at a cost of over Aus \$16,000,000. They also constructed a 125 foot cement Buddha statue at a cost of Aus \$600,000.

And the event was huge. Ninety thousand people attended from 47 countries. Nine thousand Tibetans came from Tibet with passports and visas issued by China which, while they were only valid up to Nepal, functioned to get them into India. For these Tibetans it was their first sight of the Dalai Lama and they demonstrated the great affection and faith for which they are famous. Every day he had audiences with new arrivals, all of whom were expected to return to Tibet.

All day a loudspeaker announced the names of people seeking their friends and relatives. The Kalachakra serves as a meeting place for people from all parts of the Himalayas, the Tibetan diaspora - both within India and overseas - as well as Indian enthusiasts and Western Buddhists. The element of coming together is one of the most significant parts of the Kalachakra experience. Very few see the Dalai Lama very closely, his image was relayed back through the initiation area via video, but that is not important, because everybody is in his presence.

Di Cousens

BCV Committee in 2006

Position	Organisation	Represented By
Chair	Dharma Drum Mountain	Laura Chan
Vice Chair	Buddhist Vihara of Victoria	Kosala Jayasinghe
Secretary	Quang Minh Buddhist Temple	Rachael Wass
Treasurer	Buddhist Society of Victoria	Michael Wells
Ordinary Member	Phap Lao Buddhist Centre	Tony Wilson
Ordinary Member	Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Centre	Allison Hutchinson
Ordinary Member	Buddha's Light International Assoc. Victoria	James Yang