

BUDDHIST COUNCIL OF QUEENSLAND INC. (IA29696)



*An Umbrella Organization Representing Buddhists and
Buddhist Groups And Institutions In Queensland* ABN 69 825 774 318

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PRESIDENT's REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – May 10, 2008

2007 was an outstanding year for both Buddhism in Australia and the Buddhist Council of Queensland. Significant milestones were achieved and Australia has taken notice of the growth in popularity of Buddhism and it's message of love, compassion and generosity.

The results of the 2006 Census were released in July and demonstrated that there were more than 419,000 practicing Buddhists in this country, making it the second largest faith system in Australia behind Christianity. It also demonstrated the fastest growth of all the faith systems in this country. Queensland has more than 46,000 practicing Buddhists, with over 32,000 just in the lower south-east corner of this state.

This information is supported by the growth in dharma centres over the past year, growing from sixty-seven to now eighty-eight, a significant 16% increase.

Further proof of the growing popularity of Buddhism was given when His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, toured Australia, filling stadiums and arenas everywhere he went – in Queensland, his three engagements at Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast, Karuna Hospice Services and the Boondall Entertainment Centre, both in Brisbane, were filled to capacity and tickets were exhausted within hours of release. He will be visiting Australia again this June and again in 2009.

This Council was actively involved in helping facilitate the Queensland-section of his tour by engaging other traditions and centres in his visit. This is in keeping with the Council's role of encouraging dialogue between traditions and dharma centres everywhere.

This also led to this Council taking a prominent position in supporting our brothers and sisters in Burma last September when the ruling military junta began an offensive against its citizens, including the sangha and in which an unconfirmed number of sangha have either been killed or disappeared. We have also recently taken a similar role with respect to the disturbances in Tibet. – our aim is to encourage all parties to find peaceful, fair and achievable resolutions to the differing views and expectations of all parties. May those solutions be found soon.

Representing the Buddhist community and our philosophy in the broader community has also been a prominent activity of this Council.

Working in conjunction with the Griffith University's Multi-Faith Centre at Nathan, we have co-sponsored several inter-faith dialogues and events, including the presentation of a paper to their "Practicing Our Faith Under Australia's Civil Laws", which has since been published.

Following the release of the Census results, we have now also regularly featured in the Sunday evening "Philosophy Hour" segments hosted by radio 4BC and Ian Maurice, and another day-time segment on the ABC's 4QR radio – all of which have received favourable comment.

Participation in other public events as the Buddhist representation have also included the Vietnamese Tet celebrations, Australia Day, Harmony Day and other similar activities and those organised by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

A significant Council activity has been working with the State Government's Religious Education Advisory Committee (REAC) in matters relating to the delivery of Religious Instruction to Queensland's State Schools, and related issues concerning the provision of School Chaplains. This is an increasingly important role that endorses the Buddhist contribution to state RI and future development of this program for schools generally. The Council has also been directly involved in the delivery of these programs to some schools in the Brisbane and Ipswich regions.

In addition to the work being done in the area of School Chaplains has also been our progress on working with the State Corrections Department in to also establish Religious Visitors and hopefully, in the future, accredited Prison Chaplains to Queensland's prisons. Similar work within the hospital system is also envisaged through 2008.

The above achievements of this Council's busy year in 2007 has only been possible thanks to the dedication and commitment of the members of the management committee, who have contributed enormously to the promotion of Buddhism within this State, and I extend my sincere appreciation for their efforts, and equally to those dharma centres who have provided resources for our meetings and also Jeta Gardens at Beenleigh for their encouragement too.

Despite changes to the Associations Incorporation Act that allows for a reduced level of reporting of our financial affairs, this committee voted in favour of retaining full auditing and accounting of our dealings to ensure continued transparency and responsibility for the Council's operations.

2008 stands as being another encouraging year for the dharma in Queensland. Our affiliation with the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils is expected to see a national Policy Forum to be staged in our nation's capital later this year, as well as sending a delegation of sangha and laypersons to Japan for the World Buddhist Congress in November.

The Council is also due to become an active member of the Multi-Faith Health Council that will advise the Minister for Health on matters relating to pastoral care and related topics. The Council has also secured a seat on the accreditation panel to appoint employing agencies for School Chaplains in this State.

Thank you to all member centres and individuals who have supported the Council in 2007 and we encourage you to continue that support in 2008. To those new centres and those who were not members, I also invite you to join as members and help to continue our work in representing Buddhism in the multicultural and multi-faith community.



Jim Ferguson
President