

BUDDHIST COUNCIL OF QUEENSLAND INC. (IA29696)



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

-- Affiliated Member of the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils Inc. --

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – August 8, 2009

2008 has delivered some very good outcomes for Buddhism in both Queensland and Australia, and it's practitioners. Your Council has made significant contributions to these outcomes and this is due to a very committed and active management committee.

Since the annual AGM is held roughly half way through each year, these reports fail to properly or completely the activities of this Council in an up-to-date manner. Therefore, and in acknowledging this situation, I have elected to report instead on the year from AGM to AGM, taking in the calendar year but ensuring that more current matters are also identified.

One major role of this Council is to provide a link between Buddhism and the Government bodies that deliver all the services we all share, and in so doing, strive to ensure that Buddhism is recognised as the second largest faith system behind Christianity in this country and to ensure that the interests of Buddhists are protected.

To this end, the Council now is recognised by key Government ministries and departments, those of Health, Education, Justice, Multiculturalism and Immigration in particular.

At the State level, The BCQ is the official authority for matters dealing with public education and especially Religious Instruction as the solitary non-Abrahamic voice on the Religious Education Advisory Committee [REAC]; and in a similar position for health issues as a founding member of the Qld. Multi-Faith Health Care Council [QMFHCC]. More recently, the Council has also become a founding member of the Qld. Police Multi-Faith Forum [QPMFF], the inspiration of this years' Queenslander of the Year, Sgt. Jim Bellos.

This Council's voice in REAC had delivered a modified School Prayer that acknowledges mutual respect for all religions and amending the Handbook for RI in Schools to also provide a recognition for other faith systems including Buddhism, Sikhism, Hindu and other forest traditions.

REAC is also responsible for the accreditation of Employing Authorities for School Chaplains and was instrumental in the appointment of the first Buddhist-based Authority in Queensland. Participation in REAC provides direct information to the Minister for Education on all matters relating to religion in the public school system.



The formation of QMFHCC in 2008 has also heralded major successes in the delivery of Chaplaincy services and Pastoral Care through the Queensland Health Network and once again, moves are in place to formalise an accreditation process for these chaplains and already this Council has helped to ensure that all faith are treated equally and with

due mutual recognition. This is complementary to other initiatives mentioned overleaf.



In late 2008, the Qld. Police Service established the QPMFF, a portal through which local police could better connect with communities and to help their youth to more effectively communicate with the Police and to help build closer and friendlier relations. By providing a single contact point and information fact sheets describing customs, taboos and other considerations for interacting with different communities, they are already recognising benefits being achieved through these contacts.

At the national level, this Council is an integral member of the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils [FABC]. Working in close liaison with the Australian Sangha Association [ASA], we have conjointly recorded some significant milestones during the past year.

The most significant was the placing of a copy of the Dhammapada alongside the Bible, Torah and Q'uran in the Despatch Box of the Australian Parliament. This event, just in June, is a world first in the Westminster System of Parliament and we now hope to repeat this achievement in each of the state parliaments of Australia.



Both the FABC and ASA are also actively working with the Immigration Department to produce a Visa process that will allow our sangha, who have a vow of poverty, to come and live in Australia, without having to show a financial income of circa \$40,000 per year. We expect an answer to our problems within the next few months.

We are also working towards having Buddhism formally recognised as a Religion that will permit Buddhist Marriage Celebrants and Prison and Military Chaplains to be appointed.

Two other relationships that the FABC (and therefore the BCQ) have been actively involved with are the Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations [APRO] and the forthcoming Parliament of World Religions congress to occur later this year.

At the state level this Council has also actively contributed to the initiatives of the Griffith University's Multi-Faith Centre, delivering information, lectures and participation in forums and other activities that have helped educate people in the Buddhist philosophy.

And to round off a very successful year of working with these various government bodies, your Council is also pleased to announce that we received a \$4,800 grant under the Q150 – Qld's 150th Year Celebrations, to produce a pictorial history of the growth of Buddhism in this state spanning these same 150 years. We welcome your active contributions to this project and hope that we will produce an excellent photographic publication for distribution throughout Queensland. More detail on this project are enclosed.

The remainder of 2009 continues to offer further successes for this Council and on behalf of all those Dharma centres, groups and Buddhists in Queensland we represent, we trust you will continue to demonstrate your support for our efforts and where we can assist you with your own negotiations and dealings with government and other organisations, we will be pleased to assist with letters of accreditation, support and help with department liaison wherever needed.

Jim Ferguson
President