

## **Australian Religious Response to Climate Change -Meat Free Day BCNSW Perspective**

### **What do the Buddhist scriptures say?**

The following words from Buddhist scriptures express concisely the Buddha's view on using animals and also the Buddhist ideal of non-harming (*ahimsa*):

*“All tremble at violence,  
life is dear to all.  
Putting oneself in the place of another  
one should not kill  
nor cause another to kill.”* [1]

*“Abandoning the taking of life, he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. This is part of his virtue.”* [2]

The Buddha abstained from and prohibited his monastic disciples consuming meat from certain kinds of animals, such as elephants, horses, dogs and snakes, and also from any animals killed specifically for him or his monastic disciples.[3] He and his disciples also declined invitations to ceremonies where animals were ill-treated or slaughtered.[4] While the Buddha ate meat and fish on many occasions, this must be understood in the context of the ancient India 2500 years ago, where for many people eating animals at times was necessary for survival.[5, 6]

### **What do some prominent Buddhists say?**

*“One positive development within modern society is the way in which, together with a growing appreciation of the importance of human rights, people are coming to have greater concern for animals. For example, there is growing recognition of the inhumanity of factory farming. It seems, too, that more and more people are taking an interest in vegetarianism and cutting down on their consumption of meat. I welcome this. My hope is that in the future, this concern will be extended to consideration for even the smallest creatures of the sea.”* Dalai Lama [7]

*“By eating meat we share the responsibility of climate change, the destruction of our forests, and the poisoning of our air and water. The simple act of becoming a vegetarian will make a difference in the health of our planet.”* Thich Nhat Hanh [8]

### **Why encourage your religious community to support the Meat Free Day?**

There are three main reasons why it is important to encourage your religious community to reduce meat consumption - for the animals, for our health and for our whole planet. The ARRCC Meat Free Day brochure explains in depth these 3 reasons for abstinence.

Traditionally all ordained and lay Mahayana Buddhists who cultivate the great compassion are vegetarians. More recently many practitioners from all 3 main Buddhist traditions have adopted a vegetarian diet and many meditation centres in the West now serve only vegetarian food.[6, 9, 10]

While for Buddhists vegetarian diet is a personal choice, the Buddhist Council of NSW supports both the ARRCC Meat-free Day and vegetarian diet where practically possible.[11]

### **References:**

[1] Buddhist Scriptures, The Dhammapada - The Buddha's Path of Wisdom, Chapter 10:130.  
[www.bps.lk](http://www.bps.lk); [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org)

- [2] Buddhist Scriptures, Digha Nikaya - Long Discourses of the Buddha, DN2: Samanaphapa - The Fruits of the Contemplative Life. [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org)
- [3] Buddhist Scriptures, Vinaya - The Book of Discipline, Buddhist Monastic Code II: Chapter 4 - Food. [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org)
- [4] Buddhist Scriptures, Digha Nikaya - Long Discourses of the Buddha, DN5: Kutadanta Sutta - A Bloodless Sacrifice. [www.metta.lk/tipitaka](http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka)
- [5] Piyadassi Thera, 1982. The Buddha, His Life and Teaching. The Wheel Publication 5 A/B. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka. [www.bps.lk](http://www.bps.lk)
- [6] Wikipedia, 2011. 1) Animals in Buddhism, 2) Buddhist vegetarianism. [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)
- [7] Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso 1999. Ancient Wisdom, Modern World: Ethics for the New Millennium. Little, Brown/Abacus Press.
- [8] Thich Nhat Hanh and Alan Weisman 2008. The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology. Parallax Press. Berkley, California.
- [9] VegPeace - Buddhist Vegetarian. <http://vegpeace.org/buddhistvegetarian.html>
- [10] Shabkar - Non-sectarian Website Dedicated to Vegetarianism. <http://shabkar.org/index.html>
- [11] Buddhist Council of NSW. [www.buddhistcouncil.org](http://www.buddhistcouncil.org)