



Buddhist Council of NSW

*Working*  
FOR THE  
**BUDDHIST**  
*Community*

**2017**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

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### Buddhist Council of NSW

Our **Vision**: A Dharma community with open arms  
Our **logo** reflects our vision. The multicoloured lotus represents the robes of many Buddhist Sangha. The eight-spoked Dharma wheel in the centre represents the original teaching respected by all Buddhists. A Dharma Community with Open Arms can therefore be seen as the different lotus petals reaching out to embrace all beings, and united by the One Dharma.

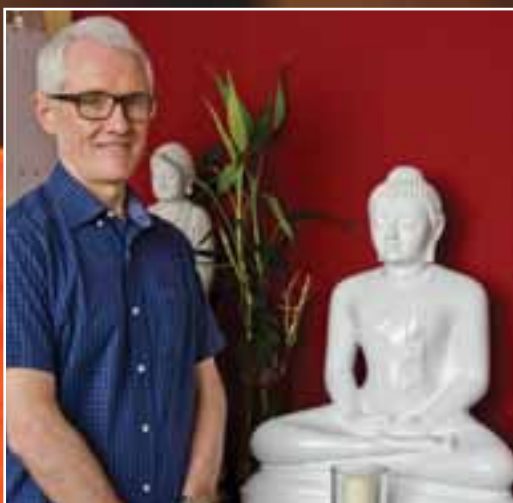
Our **motto** reflects what we do, which is working for the Buddhist community.

Buddhist Council of New South Wales Incorporated. Our constitution was first ratified at the inaugural Annual General Meeting in June, 1985 and was formally incorporated in March, 1991.

ABN 18 550 218 989

We are grateful to Centrum Printing for donating the printing of this report.





Brian White, Chairman

## WELCOME

On behalf of the team at the Buddhist Council of New South Wales I welcome you to our annual report for 2017.

It's well known that Buddhism was the fastest growing religion in Australia from 1996 to 2011, but the 2016 census shows that the growth of Buddhism in Australia is slowing down. Will Buddhism eventually stop growing and start to get smaller? To make sure future generations have the opportunity to learn and practice the teachings of the Buddha we need to ask ourselves "What we can do?".

Australian Buddhism is very multicultural, as can be seen from the diversity of our member organisations shown later in this report. On the surface, different Buddhist centres and temples look like they have little in common. Importantly, we all share the Dharma and the same original teacher, the Buddha. Our common connection to the same teachings defines the Buddhist community, made up of many cultures and traditions. This is why we come together in May each year to celebrate the life and teachings of the Buddha. Our Vesak and Buddha's birthday celebrations achieve two things. Firstly, it shows the whole society the qualities and practices of Buddhism. Secondly, it enables the different traditions and cultures of Buddhism to understand each other a bit more.

To make sure that Buddhism is available for future generations, we need to understand the many types of Buddhist centres and temples in the community. The Buddhist community is only as strong as the organisations which run the ceremonies, teachings, retreats, cultural activities and festivities. There are many common challenges shared by temples and Buddhist groups across our community, challenges such as fundraising, regulatory compliance and recruiting volunteers. These challenges are highlighted by the increasing media attention on religious organisations and the tightening of government regulations. The Buddhist Council is here to help the community, not only to represent our interests to government, but also to provide useful assistance and advice to temples and Buddhist groups. You can see later in this report how we help our member organisations.

I thank our member organisations, our dedicated staff, the many volunteers in schools, hospitals and prisons, our generous donors, friends and supporters and my fellow directors on the board. I hope you enjoy this annual report.

Brian White, Chairman

## THANK YOU TO OUR TEAM

Amber Tieu (Finance Assistant), Brent Carswell (Advisor Print and Design), Cheryl Huynh (Assistant), Ettianne Anshin (Chaplaincy Manager), Glenn Sloan (General Manager), Hazel Duell (Chaplaincy Trainer), Heather Topp (Interfaith Representative), Lay Lim (Finance Assistant), Louise Neary (Admin Assistant), Melissa Chittasy (incoming SRE Manager), Phoi Duong (incoming Finance Manager), Sue Luu (Admin Assistant), Trish Nguyen (Chaplaincy Assistant), Yoke Leng Tang (Member Help Assistant), Cara Dibdin (Marketing), Jackie Iskandar (outgoing Finance Manager), Kerrie Kiem (outgoing SRE Manager), and Tammy Tran (Chaplaincy Assistant).



## FROM OUR GENERAL MANAGER

Wow, this has been a year of ups and downs for the Buddhist Council of New South Wales! We started the year in a flurry of activity, spending January completing our new syllabus and training materials for teaching Buddhist values and life skills to children (Special Religious Education or SRE). This project included setting up an online resource portal for our dedicated volunteer SRE teachers.

February was another big month for SRE, as we managed to train nearly 40 new teachers. The rest of the year was spent providing fast-track re-accreditation and training for the majority of our existing teachers in accordance with recently strengthened Government regulations. This training also introduced our newly expanded syllabus. I am grateful for all of the staff and volunteers at BCNSW, who contributed to this incredible effort.

We also managed to find a new insurance broker this year and have secured savings on premiums for our members of up to 40% each year.

Although being understaffed, our web support team advertise and promote an average of 100 Buddhist community events at any given time. Additionally, our office support volunteers respond to several hundred enquiries per quarter.

Our new partnership with one of our members has resulted in six new service courses for our existing chaplains. We also had our first community spiritual care training program offered to those interested in helping and supporting their friends and community members.

We would not have been able to provide these services to the community without the unparalleled help of our dedicated staff of volunteers. To these volunteers who have provided such assistance, I offer my sincerest gratitude.

Glenn Sloan, General Manager



## EVENTS OVER THE YEARS

Offering food to 40  
ordained sangha from all  
traditions at Dana Day



The Dalai Lama answers  
questions from Buddhist  
SRE students

Mitra Conference supported  
by BCNSW

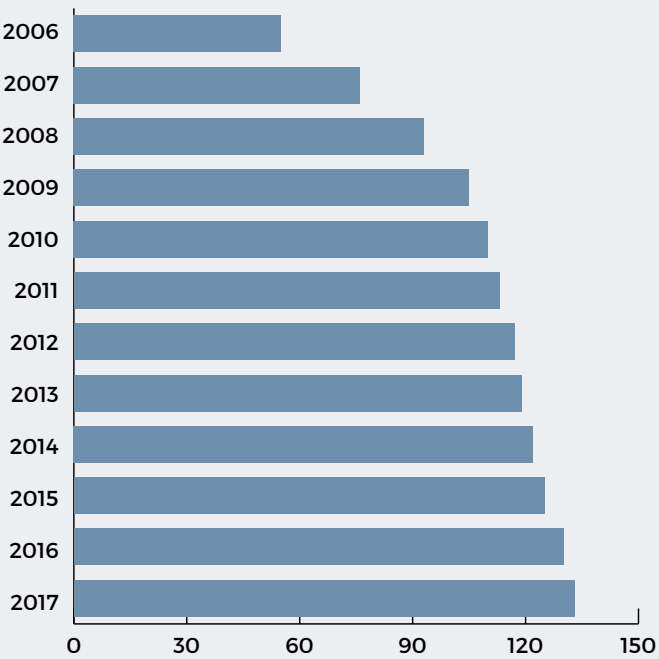


Guided tour of Buddhist Expo

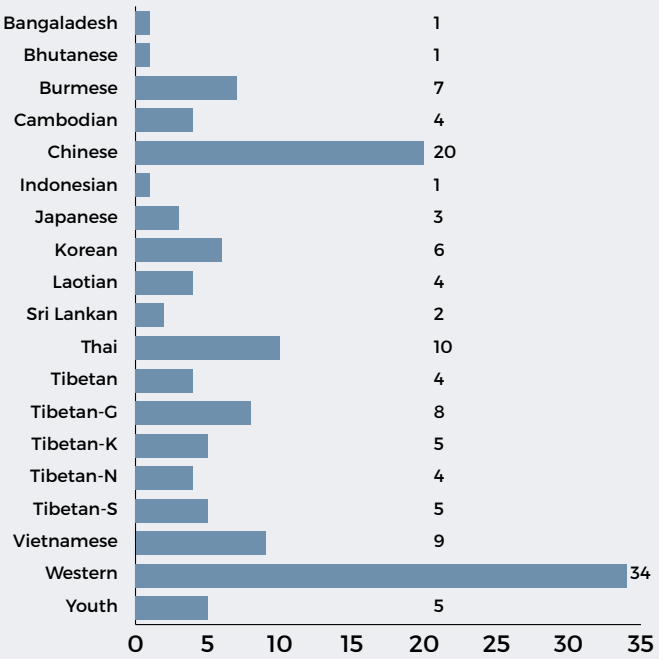


MEMBERSHIP

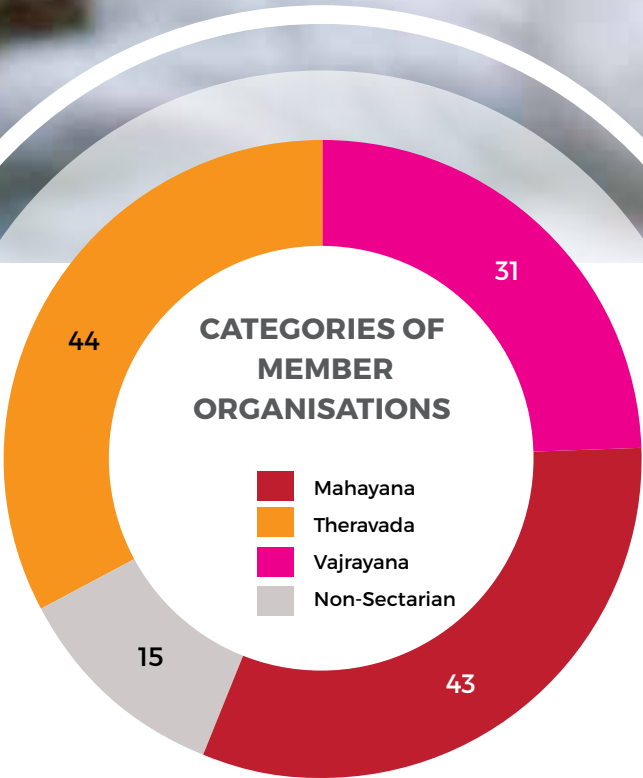
GROWTH IN MEMBERSHIP



CULTURE OF MEMBER ORGANISATION



CATEGORIES OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS



## HELPING MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

The Buddhist Council helps member organisations in a variety of ways.

### Marketing support

Our website has a specially designed web page which makes it easy for the community to find the Buddhist event they like. For example a teaching event, ceremony, or retreat. Our technical team optimizes web traffic to these events. We also have a function called 'Find a Buddhist centre'.

### Event Support

We can assist in conducting Buddhist events. For example, our members can borrow Buddhist flags, Buddhist decorations, public address equipment, and even educational storyboards explaining the Buddha's life and teachings.

### Letters of support

Examples of our letters of support include:

- Exemption from the Charitable Fundraising Act
- Support for visa applications of visiting teachers
- Support for development applications to build new temples

### Low Cost Insurance

There are huge saving on insurance premiums of up to 40% for all our member organisations. The group policy we have negotiated covers more than 30 organisations. Our team is working with the insurance industry to extend insurance options beyond public liability insurance to other types of insurance.

### Locating specialist advice

Sometimes Buddhist centres and temples need advice on tax status or governance, etc. Our office team might have the shortcuts you need, or we might locate someone in the Buddhist community who could help.



## TRAINING FOR WORK IN OUR COMMUNITY

Our Training Unit plays a special role in providing the skills and knowledge to help others in the community. Our training modules assume a background in Buddhist knowledge and practice. We avoid duplicating the teaching of Buddhism undertaken in our member organisations (temples and Buddhist centres).

Anyone in the Buddhist community should be able to apply their Buddhist knowledge and practice to help others!





## CHAPLAINCY

The Buddhist Council has a dedicated team of trained chaplains, ranging from regular chaplains who commit their time to visit hospitals and prisons, to on-call, emergency response chaplains. The core principle of this program is to offer compassion, care and spiritual support to those in need through our practices of listening, ethics and loving kindness.

Over the past few decades, Australia has diversified in terms of culture and religions. This has led to an exponential increase in awareness of meditation's benefits, which has in turn led to a dramatic growth in demand for Buddhist chaplains.

We appreciate all of our chaplains for their kind hearts and incredible generosity. They are skilled and careful listeners, who make an important contribution to the spiritual wellbeing of those suffering hardship. They also empower people to change their lives.

In response to this high demand for chaplains in hospitals and corrective services across NSW, we are proud to announce that we have provided 17 hospital chaplains and 8 prison chaplains. These figures are expected to rise in 2018. The average hours

dedicated to face-to face visits with patients and inmates were 190 hours and 135 hours, respectively.

While hospital patients typically are in hospital for less than a week, the much longer duration of incarceration means that prison inmates can have support provided over extended periods of time.

Furthermore, our support team is putting more effort into providing materials for those in need, including books and teaching materials for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. We are looking for additional chaplains who are able to speak Asian languages to join our team of chaplains, or to provide us with suitable materials.



## Helping the aged

We previously conducted a nursing home pilot project which provided guided meditation for both residents and staff. In the future we hope to build on this successful pilot by extending our care programs for more regular and formalised guided meditation in nursing homes, as well as partnering with our members to arrange home visits for the aged. This will depend on an assessment of community need, the availability of funding and manpower and the regulations supporting the new aged care funding programs being introduced by the federal government.

## GOVERNANCE

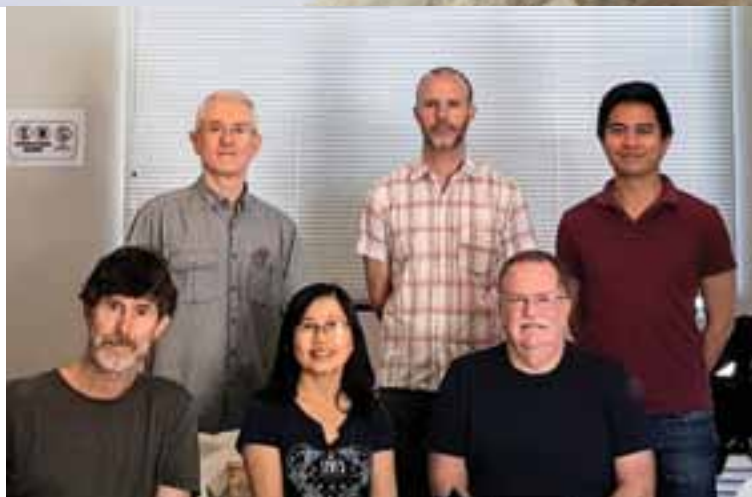
During the year the directors met four times in addition to the annual general meeting. We were sad to say farewell in November to Les Tscherne who retired after four active years on our board.

The meetings attended by our directors (including the AGM) are as follows: Brian White (5), Ben Webster (5), Les Tscherne (5), Lianne Ngo (4), Gawaine Powell-Davies (3) and Ariya Chittasy (2).

### Assessing our governance

Using experience in assisting member organisations over the years, the Buddhist Council has developed an assessment method which indicates the level of attainment on a number of governance criteria. This assessment is the foundation of the governance training offered by our Training Unit to help our member organisations. The attainment is at four levels: Non-compliant (no stars), Compliant (1 star), Functioning (2 stars) and Flourishing (3 stars).

All governance criteria have maintained a 2 or 3 star rating from last year except Solvency (Can pay all debts that are due in next 12 months) which has improved from 2 to 3 stars. The other criteria which have remained the same are: Constitution, Clear Purpose, Financial Management, Internal Reporting, External Reporting, Performance monitoring, Compliance, External Relationships, Clear direction, and Risk Management.



Our board (back) Brian White (Chairman), Ben Webster (Secretary), Ariya Chittasy and (front) Gawaine Powell-Davies, Lianne Ngo, Les Tscherne



## OUTREACH TO THE COMMUNITY

The Buddhist Council uses a number of tools to provide information to the community. The new website has been designed to be compatible with new smartphones and tablets. It highlights five key functions: finding a Buddhist centre; finding a Buddhist event; member help; training volunteers, and opportunities for volunteers.

Our Event Page allows the community to find any event using keywords, type of event, location or date.

Our find a centre page allows anyone new to Buddhism to find a Buddhist centre offering what he or she needs, but also in the preferred culture and language.





## VALUES AND LIFE SKILLS FOR CHILDREN

The Buddhist Council supports approximately 80 volunteer teachers who teach Buddhist Special Religious Education (SRE) in well over 40 primary and secondary government schools across NSW.

The demand for classes on Buddhism has risen significantly. Most schools now require two SRE teachers instead of one, and there are a further 25 plus schools currently on the waiting list for Buddhist SRE teachers.

The SRE's focus this year related to changes in policies and procedures from the NSW Department of Education. Training our existing teachers in accordance with these regulations was our highest priority, as they would not be able to continue in 2019 without it. Fortunately, the vast majority of our SRE teachers have undertaken extensive training workshops and are looking forward to continuing classes.

'Values and Life Skills' is our underlying foundation for the teaching Buddhism. We offer children this knowledge to support them in their daily lives and to help them develop greater peace, compassion, and joy.

In August, we welcomed Melissa Chittasy as the new SRE Manager. Melissa has a deep passion for, and is studying, young children's education. Her priority is to create a support relationship with the SRE teachers and to facilitate the growth of the SRE program.

We appreciate all of our SRE teachers for their continuous devotion to teaching the Dharma to students.

There is a high demand for new Buddhist scripture teachers and we welcome anyone who would like to spread this spirit to contact us to learn more.





### Values and life skills for children (cont.)

In designing our new and significantly expanded syllabus, the starting point was recognising the factors which contribute to the wellbeing and happiness of children, particularly the skills and attitudes a child learns in order to manage his or her life while young. These skills and attitudes can be a foundation to prepare the child for adulthood.

The Buddhist SRE Syllabus aims to

1. Instill values and attitudes which are consistent with the Buddha's teachings
2. Help children understand the Buddha's teachings and how to practice them
3. Enable children to learn life skills based on the Buddha's teachings

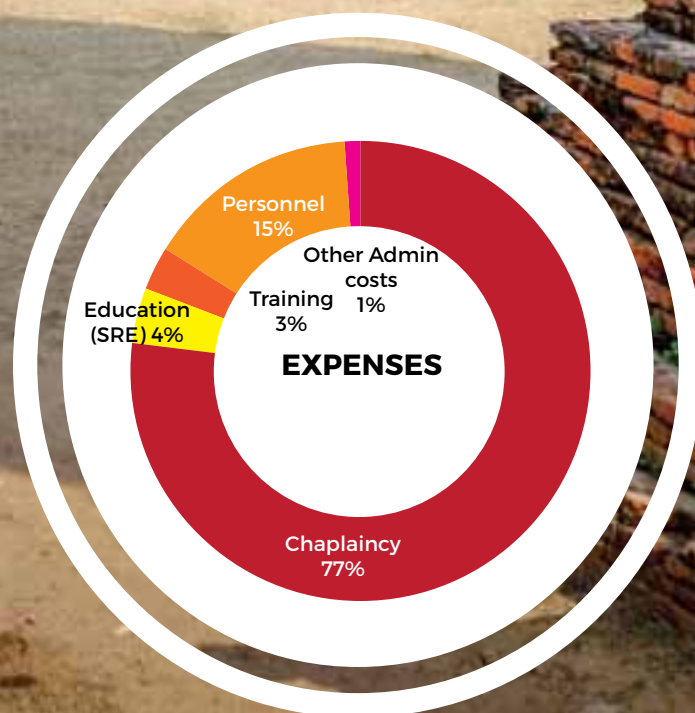
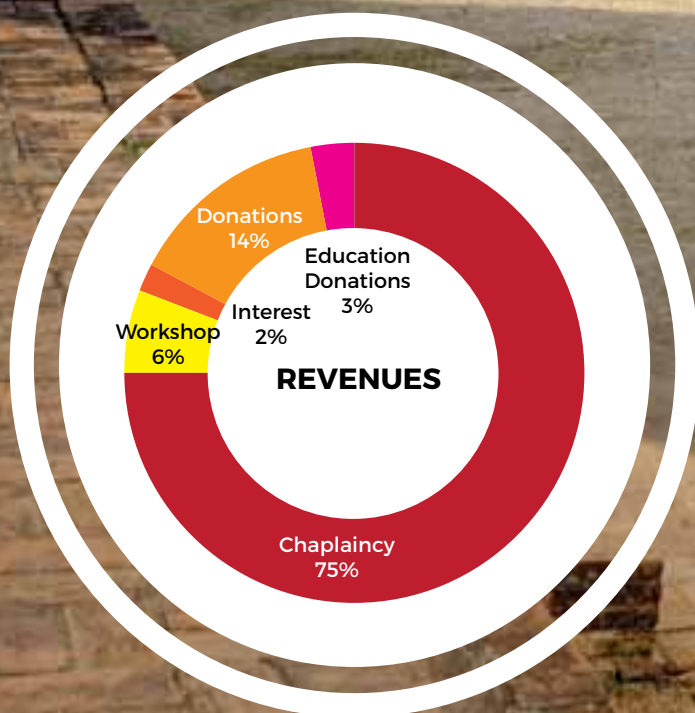
The Buddhist SRE program is organised into four strands. Individual lessons will depend on the teacher's background and the knowledge level of students. The four strands are:

- **Being a Buddhist:** The understanding and practice of the Buddha's teachings from an individual perspective.
- **Buddhism in Society:** The context of Buddhism, how it has evolved, the forms it takes and how Buddhism and society interact.
- **Values and Attitudes:** The values which underpin the Buddha's teachings, exemplified by the virtues of the Buddha, such as compassion and generosity.
- **Life Skills:** Effective ways to manage life such as managing negative emotions, developing good friendships, and speaking mindfully.



## SUMMARY OF FIVE YEAR RESULTS

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Income	146,924	172,450	186,084	166,414	173,599
Expenses	132,538	153,760	168,134	169,811	172,224
Operating Surplus	14,386	18,690	17,950	-3,397	1,375
Increase in Members' Funds	14,386	18,690	17,950	-3,397	1,375
Total Members' Funds	109,483	128,173	146,123	142,726	144,101



## FINANCES

This year, the Buddhist Council of NSW generated a small surplus of \$1,375.

Revenue for 2017 totalled \$173,599, an increase of 4% compared to last year (2016: \$166,414). This was due to a rise in donations received for Education and Training and Workshops.

Expenses for 2017 were \$172,224 which was slightly higher than last year (1% increase).

The Council's financial position has increased slightly by \$1,375 which is an improvement from the deficit in the previous year.

In 2017, our focus was to continue to invest in the SRE programme to assist teachers and provide more care and support through chaplaincy visits.

The Buddhist Council has been growing steadily in recent years as can be seen from summary of the five-year results shown.





**BUSINESS MODEL**

The Buddhist Council of NSW does not receive government grants. We depend on donations from the community. The diagram below shows how we are striving to improve our financial sustainability.

Note 1: An independent auditor has examined Chaplaincy program costs and has provided advice (for the Buddhist Council, Health Department and Corrective Services Department) that proper governance of the Buddhist chaplaincy program should recognise a provision for administration and overheads costs.  
Note 2: The Education Fund has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status from the ATO.  
Note 3: The Training Unit charges fees in the range of \$10 to \$300, depending on the duration.





## **Buddhist Council of NSW**

*Working for the Buddhist Community*

### **GOLDEN RULES**

We try to find ways to spread the understanding and practice of the Dharma, without duplicating what our member organisations are doing.

We work for the Dharma, not for ourselves.

We are mindful of all our other responsibilities, so that whatever we do for the Buddhist Council of NSW is the practice of the Middle Path.

We use the Dharma in our work for the Buddhist Council of NSW, so that whatever obstacles we face, we can endure and overcome as part of our Dharma practice

### **Contact details**

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