

Article for Quang Minh Temple Newsletter. July 2004



Buddhist values and philosophy have much to contribute to the future of the world, and there is no better way than through the education of our young people. By making Buddhist teachings available in primary schools not only are we contributing to the future world but Buddhist children can feel that their religious and cultural backgrounds are being recognized and respected in the mainstream Australian culture.

These words and ideals are very important to me - they come from the depths of my heart. As Convenor of the Buddhist Council of Victoria Education Project I am totally committed to seeing Buddhism take its place alongside other faiths in the Religious Instruction program in Victorian government primary schools. Although only a Buddhist for 16 years, I know from personal experience that the Buddha's teachings have great value and much to offer the modern world.

In July, 2002, when I was a representative on the Buddhist Council of Victoria I was asked to take up the issue of Buddhist Education. As a teacher for more than 30 years, I was an obvious choice! So we invited interested people from Buddhist communities all over Melbourne to come to a meeting. That is how it all started!

From there we became the Education & Accreditation Sub-Committee. It has always been important to have a wide representation of the different Buddhist traditions and cultural groups on the Committee. At the moment there are people from the Chinese, Cambodian, Sri Lankan and Vietnamese communities, along with Australian-background Buddhists. Ms. Sarah Palmer from Quang Minh Temple is the Committee Secretary and Mr. Dong Tran, also from Quang Minh Temple is our highly skilled Webmaster.

In 2 years much progress has been made. Right now the Committee and the Project Officer, Ms Sue Smith, are working to create a programme in government primary schools, which would provide parents and children with the choice of Buddhist Religious Instruction classes for 30 minutes per week. This has never been done before in Victoria. We now have 16

trained volunteer teachers, an interesting curriculum and stimulating resources and materials.

The basis for all instruction will be the Triple Gem - the Buddha, Dhamma(Dharma) and Sangha. It would include the life story of the Buddha, the teachings of harmony, peace and tolerance and the moral ethics of Buddhism. Children will also be introduced to the basic steps of meditation and devotion. Lessons will be fun and stimulating with many activities to encourage co-operation and sharing whilst learning the basics of Buddhism.

We are very grateful to Quang Minh Temple for making office space available for the Buddhist Education Project Officer, Ms. Sue Smith, and for welcoming her into the community. Ven. Thich Phuoc Thanh has been a "tower of strength" and great encourager of the Education Project. Many many thank yous Venerable!

I always enjoy my visits to Quang Minh Temple, meeting new people and seeing old faces again. There is always something new and interesting happening! I look forward to many more visits and contact with the community of Quang Minh Temple.

For any further information about the Buddhist Education Project, membership of the Committee or volunteering as a Buddhist RI teacher, please call Sue or myself on 0429 416 336. And don't forget to go to the website - www.bcvic.org.au.

May you all be well and happy!

Judith Macdonald.

Convenor, BCV Education & Accreditation Sub-Committee.

