Widespread dissatisfaction with the government as a result of great economic hardship caused to the people by the government’s decision to increase the price of fuel drew the Alliance of All BUdhist monks in public protest onto the streets of Yangon in September 2007. The Alliance described the military government as ‘the enemy of the people’. After allowing the street demonstrations to continue for a week, the military went into action when the public responded to a call by the monks to join in the protest. Soldiers fired into crowds, killing some, thousands were taken into detention to be transported to prison camps.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for much of the time. The political rhetoric she uses to convey her message to the military and to the general public is consonant with traditional Buddhist beliefs (McCarthy, 2004). Myanmars have for so long been isolated from international debates on political matters that they could be led into regarding Western democracy and liberalism as alien to their traditions. So Suu Kyi presents her model of democracy in Buddhist terms. McCarthy points out that Suu Kyi has used the traditions laid down by the emperor Asoka to remind people that ‘the legitimacy of a government is founded on the consent of the people, who may withdraw the mandate if they lose confidence in the ability of the ruler to serve their best interests’. How to withdraw the mandate when, as in Myanmar, faced with a threat to its legitimacy, the military junta has not flinched from ruthless use of force to suppress opposition? General Ne Win once warned protesters that ‘when the army shoots, it shoots straight’.

The Buddha had often spoken about the futilities of attempts to resolve disputes by force, of gloating over victory in the battlefield that left the vanquished filled with hatred for the victor and thirsting for revenge. Towards the end of his life he was told that the king of a neighbouring state had attacked and razed to the ground the capital of the small state his father once ruled. He listened in silence. An historical survey of the successes and failures of human endeavours to conceptualise a higher morality and device methods to ensure rulers are guided by it in affairs of the state will surely give most people now, as in the Buddha’s time, cause for profound silence.

D.S. ARYAYAGUNAWARDENA

BUDDHISM IN AUSTRALIA

See also THEOSOPHY

Buddhism, in all its varied forms, has come to Australia since European settlement in 1788, first as the religion of itinerant workers from Asia, next with the lectures of Theosophists from the United States, and then as the import mainly of a few Anglo-Australians from among the literati. With the relaxation of the White Australia Policy beginning in 1966, Buddhist immigrants arrived from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia. The large influx of refugees in the mid-1970s from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, following wars in those countries, saw Buddhism become the fastest-growing religion in Australia. During the past four decades, global influences such as the World Wide Web, books and meditation retreats led by teachers from Europe and North America have introduced Australians to a Buddhism they can adopt without involvement in the cultural practices of immigrant Buddhists.

It took over two millennia for Buddhism to reach Australia. Now, for the first time in history, in Australia and several other Western countries, all forms of Buddhism exist in one country, sometimes in one major city. Immigrant Buddhists from Asian countries where Buddhism is the dominant religion are adapting to settlement as adherents of a minority religion. Diversity is one of the characteristics of Buddhism in Australia.

At the Australian Census of 2006, 418,756 people, or 2.1 per cent of the total population, identified as Buddhists. Percentages on a state/territory basis and for the whole of Australia for 1996, 2001 and 2006 are presented in Table 7.

As the above statistics indicate, the number of Buddhists in Australia has more than doubled during the decade between 1996 and 2006. Vietnamese immigrants and their descendants comprise the largest single group of Buddhists. Buddhism is Australia’s most significant minority religion, as the following figures from the 2006 Census indicate:

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>3,884</td>
<td>6,120</td>
<td>7,139</td>
<td>(2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>81,945</td>
<td>147,839</td>
<td>168,057</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>1,508</td>
<td>2,619</td>
<td>2,843</td>
<td>(1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>16,010</td>
<td>37,525</td>
<td>47,509</td>
<td>(1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>11,405</td>
<td>19,371</td>
<td>23,205</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>2,609</td>
<td>(0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>62,896</td>
<td>111,664</td>
<td>132,633</td>
<td>(2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>18,509</td>
<td>29,963</td>
<td>34,349</td>
<td>(1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>199,812</td>
<td>357,813</td>
<td>418,756</td>
<td>(2.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes Christmas and Coeds (Keeling) islands

The first historical record of Buddhists arriving in Australia may be dated to 1851, when a shipload of Chinese landed in Adelaide and made the long trek on foot to work as labourers on the goldfields in central Victoria. They were prohibited from going ashore in Melbourne, the capital of Victoria. It seems likely that their religion was a hybrid mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. For a few decades from the 1870s, the pearl industry in Broome, Darwin and Thursday Island attracted Sinhalese (who formed the major ethnic group in Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon) and Japanese workers. Most of them were Buddhists.

On 15 October 1882, 485 men and 12 women, most, if not all, of them Sinhalese Buddhists, recruited by the Mackay Planters and Farmers Association through an agent in Sri Lanka, sailed from Colombo on board the SS Devonshire, bound for Australia. On the 15th of the following month, 273 of them landed in Mackay and the rest went ashore in Busselton two days later. In both towns these people found work in the cane sugar plantations ungenially, having worked in Sri Lanka as carpenters, blacksmiths, cooks and house servants. Some absconded and went to New South Wales or returned to Sri Lanka. Many stayed on in Queensland and established themselves on the land. Some of the Sinhalese drifted to Thursday Island, where they were soon joined by other Sinhalese arriving from the coastal districts in the south of Sri Lanka to work in the pearl trade. So, on a little island of about 2 square kilometres, the Sinhalese Buddhist community, comprising about 100 families, came to have an identity of its own. Among the things they did early in their settlement was to recreate the traditions of their religion; they built a small Buddhist shrine and celebrated Vesak on the full-moon day of May to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha.

This shrine went to ruin when, following the establishment of the Australian federation in 1901, most of the Sinhalese went back to Sri Lanka, fearing
that Australian immigration policies would impact harshly on Asian settlers. The Sinhalese who stayed behind moved to various parts of Queensland and lost touch with each other. Their descendants had strong interest to convert to Christianity.

Buddhism, and elements of it as brought to Australia by the Chinese, the Japanese and the Sinhalese, fell on arid ground. The religious belief and practices of these ethnic groups did not resonate with their Anglo-Saxon contacts, who looked askance at the Asians in their midst as having little more to offer than their labour. However, there were in the large cities small groups of people comprising spiritualists, Theosophists and some others whose wide reading led them to regard the East as a source of some special wisdom. Esoteric teachings had considerable appeal for them.

The Theosophists appeared to be a good source of Buddhist knowledge for this group of Australians. Thus, for example, the Australian spiritualist journal, Harbinger of Light, in its July 1878 issue, quoted from the text published in The American Spiritualist of a public debate that took place in Sri Lanka in 1873 between two Christian missionaries and a Buddhist monk. Harbinger of Light commented that the ‘true essence of morality is higher and the practice of charitable deeds far more prevalent in Buddhism than in Christian countries’. This journal was edited by W.H. Terry, owner of a spiritualist bookshop in Melbourne who did much to publicise Buddhism in Australia in the 1880s.

Madame Helene Blavatsky (1831–91) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875 to encourage, among other things, the study of comparative religion. In May 1880, they formally converted to Buddhism when they knelt before a monk in a temple in the southern Sri Lankan port city, Galle, and took the three refuges – the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha – and the five Buddhist lay precepts: to abstain from taking life, to abstain from taking what is not given, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from telling lies and to abstain from intoxicating substances that occasion heedlessness. Olcott came to Australia in early 1891 to spend several months lecturing on Theosophy and Buddhism. The first Australian branch of the Theosophical Society was established in Hobart in 1889 and the second in Melbourne two years later. There were many differences between Theosophy and Buddhism, but as both founders of the Theosophical Society were held in high regard, some people in the United States, Europe and Australia began to take a serious interest in Buddhism.

Olcott claimed during his lecture tour of Australia that the central aim of Theosophy was to disseminate Buddhist philosophy. The chairman at Olcott’s Melbourne lectures was Alfred Deakin (1856–1919), a past president of the Melbourne Spiritualists Association, an active member of the Theosophical Society, Australian Liberal politician, and later to be three times prime minister of Australia. A year earlier, Olcott had visited Australia, and Deakin had spent three months in India and Sri Lanka and devoted three chapters to Buddhism in a book he wrote, titled Temple and Tomb in India.

Theosophy was eclectic, having as its declared objective the formation of a universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race and creed. It stirred some upper-middle-class Australians to study Eastern religions, especially Buddhism. In 1925, Irish-born poet Max Dunn (1895–1965) and a few others in Melbourne formed an informal group called The Little Circle of the Dharma. In 1938, a Melbourne architect, Len Bullen, announced the establishment of a group to promote interest in Buddhism. It appears from the notice distributed that Len Bullen’s aim was to attract people to learn about the Buddha’s teaching by pointing out that it offered tangible benefits ‘as a workable psychology adaptable for modern problems’ and that membership of the group did not require people to necessarily call themselves Buddhists. In an essay he published (not dated), titled A Technique of Living Based on Buddhist Psychological Principles, Len Bullen focused on mindfulness ‘which, in the Buddhist system of self-training, becomes the focal point.’ This was reprinted by the Buddhist Publication Society of Kandy, Sri Lanka, in 1976.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 ended the activities of this group and it was only some years after hostilities ended that organised Budhism gained a footing in Australia. This time the initiative came from Leo Berkeley, an Englishman who migrated to Australia in 1947 and established himself successfully in business in Sydney. In mid-1951, while returning from a visit to England, he went ashore in Colombo, where a Sri Lankan politician introduced him to a prominent monk, Narada. Berkeley took seriously Narada’s suggestion that he establish a Buddhist centre in Sydney. Soon after he returned home he won over Marie Byles (1900–79), a Sydney solicitor, to the idea of establishing a Buddhist group. Marie Byles had made three visits to meditation centres in Burma, studied Zen in Japan and written four books on Buddhism. In newspaper advertisements Berkeley invited people to attend discussions on Buddhism at his home in the Sydney suburb of East Roseville. Ten people attended the first meeting. A few to three months later, the Sunday evening meetings were drawing up to 30 people and the Buddhist Society, at first a loosely knit group, went on to play an important role in the establishment of organised Buddhism in Australia.

Perhaps only a few, if any at all, of the people who attended the Buddhist Society’s meetings would have regarded themselves as Buddhists. The meetings were designed to give interested people an opportunity to learn about the Buddha’s teachings and accept what they thought would help them to cope with some of life’s problems. Meditation and mindfulness training were new to many, who were seriously interested in Buddhism. The need to reach out beyond books and occasional lectures by lay people to instruction from an ordained practitioner of the religion.

Australia’s long line of Buddhist teachers begins with the arrival of United States-born nun Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna in August 1952. Ordained in China, she had been living for some years in Sri Lanka, home of the president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB), Professor Gunapala Malalasekera. The WFB sponsored her visit to Australia. When she arrived in Sydney, Leo Berkeley arranged for her to instruct a small group of people in the Dhamma. Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna left for Los Angeles in mid-1953 and returned to Sydney in August 1957 to spend a year teaching before retiring to Hawaii.

The Buddhist Society of New South Wales was formally established in Sydney on 4 May 1953, with Leo Berkeley as its founding president. As the society needed a registered office, Berkeley set aside a room for the purpose in his business premises at Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, close to Sydney’s central business district. Lectures, followed by discussions, were held every Friday evening in the hall of the Theosophical Society. In 1955, Laksiri Jayasuriya, who had come from Sri Lanka to do graduate studies at the University of Sydney, brought out the first issue of the society’s bi-monthly journal, Sutta, shortly before he returned home. Natasha Jackson took over as editor to become, according to Crocker, ‘the dominant voice in Australian Buddhism from 1955 to 1971’. In 1959, the Buddhist Society of New South Wales merged with its Melbourne counterpart to become the Australian Buddhist Federation. As stated in the constitution, the object of the Federation shall be the cooperative effort of all affiliated Australian Buddhist organisations for the dissemination of the teachings of the Buddha, as based on the three characteristics (Dukkha, Anice and Anatta), the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path. Jayasuriya returned to Australia in 1972 to teach social work at the University of Western Australia in Perth, first as a senior lecturer, then as professor. He took the initiative in 1974 to establish the Buddhist Society of Western Australia.

In the history of Australian Buddhism, Len Bullen was to Melbourne what Leo Berkeley was to Sydney. It took some time for Len Bullen to take up the threads he had let go in 1939 when called to war service. Beginning in April 1953, with four to five
people meeting in a Melbourne city café to talk about Buddhism. Bullen went on to call a public meeting of interested people on 6 October 1953 to establish a formal study group. Fifteen people attended that meeting, which was held in a Presbyterian meeting room in the city. Thereafter, meetings of what was called the Melbourne Buddhist Study Group were held on alternate Tuesdays. A committee, formed in November 1953 with Len Bullen as president, described the group’s aims as ‘the study, the practice, and the realisation of the Dhamma’.

Croucher observes that ‘the years 1954–56 were halcyon days for Australian Buddhism, with eminent visitors lecturing to packed auditoriums and receiving wide media attention, a number of Australian becoming monks in Asia, and with societies experiencing a considerable growth’. A Burmese monk, U Thitila, who made the first of three visits to Australia in April 1954, helped the incipient Buddhist societies in Victoria and New South Wales to increase their membership to 40 and 100, respectively.

On 1 February 1955, Narada Thera, who as mentioned above had encouraged Leo Berkeley to establish a Buddhist centre in Sydney, arrived in Australia from Sri Lanka for three months. He gave talks in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart. Other special activities he undertook were to impart instruction in meditation, to teach Pali to those who were from the language in which the teachings of Theravada Buddhism were recorded, and advise on the establishment of Buddhist societies in Brisbane and Tasmania.

The leap from visiting teachers to a resident monk was made in May 1971 with the arrival in Sydney of a young Sri Lankan monk, Rambhuvan Samatthapana Thera. For a while, he performed his religious activities from an apartment while his small group of lay supporters established Australia’s first Buddhist temple, or vihara, in Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains. Samatthapana Thera moved into it in May 1973 as its first incumbent. In 1973, the Chinese Buddhist Society of Australia was established in the Chinatown area of Sydney.

Australia’s Buddhist population, and the number of resident monks and places of Buddhist worship began to increase substantially in the mid-1970s with the arrival of refugees and immigrants from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. The Buddhists among the first wave of refugees and immigrants found few institutions of their religion to assist them in settling into a new homeland. They established these in due course. In a case study done in 1995, a sample group of nearly 40 Vietnamese Buddhists who had immigrated to Australia between 1980 and 1994 were interviewed about their settlement experiences in Australia. All were resident in Melbourne. While the responses of interviewees cannot be used as a basis for generalisation to the Vietnamese Buddhist community, they do give a glimpse of the role religion plays in the lives of migrants. Some of the responses were:

- The temple is very important to me because it is like a home to the Vietnamese community.
- It is also a place where I can find tranquillity.
- The Buddhist community and temple are important to me because they bring peace to people.
- If there is peace in the mind, there is peace in the world.
- I know some people in the temple and they advised what I should do in order to get a job. The Buddhist community is very weak at the moment but when it is strong it should expand its services. More Buddhist teachings should be given to people (specialists) that help more, whenever they need.

Bueno (1996, 68–69)

Buddhist immigrants built temples to recreate the religious life they had been nurtured in, and to ensure their children would follow the parents’ religion rather than rapidly assimilate into the local culture. The temple was important in the community life of immigrants as a place for worship, celebrating festivals and forming new friendships. Buddhist monks had an important role teaching the Dhamma, providing guidance at funerals and as recipients of alms in the merit-earning and merit-giving (to deceased parents, for instance) activities of lay people.

Immigrant Buddhists claimed adherence to one of the three traditions of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

The Theravada is literally the ‘doctrine of the Elders’, the Elders being senior monks, regarded as custodians of the Dhamma. Theravadins point out that their beliefs and practices derive from the earliest written record of the Buddha’s teachings, the Pali Canon, which consists of three collections of texts: the Vinaya, or code of discipline for monks and nuns, the Suttas, or discourses of the Buddha, and the Abhidhamma, or systematic philosophy. Regarding Caranam the Buddha, Theravadins maintain that while he was a historical person who attained the highest goal of enlightenment, or nirvana, he, like all other human beings, was subject to old age, sickness and death; by attaining nirvana, he ended his cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Men and women can enter the order of monks, the Sangha, established by the Buddha, and strive to become arahatas, or those who have completely extinguished the fires of greed, hatred and delusion to attain nirvana. Each individual has to seek awakening or salvation through his/her own efforts; it helps to have a teacher who has already advanced on the path to awakening. As it is extremely difficult for lay people to attain enlightenment, Theravadins advise them to earn merit by supporting the Sangha in order to assure themselves of rebirth in circumstances they consider ideal. Theravada Buddhism has been brought to Australia by immigrants from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Kampuchea and Laos—countries where this tradition of Buddhism is the dominant religion.

The Mahayana, or the ‘Great Vehicle’, is a Buddhist tradition that appeared in India about 400 years after the Buddha’s death, or just before the beginning of the Christian era. Mahayanaists claim that the Buddha preached the Dhamma for a second time as the Mahayana. Its main features are the bodhisattva ideal, salvation through compassion, and the teaching that enlightenment is as accessible to lay people as it is to monks and nuns. So the Mahayanaists, having attained enlightenment, postpones the bliss of nirvana indefinitely in order to return to this world again and again to help all sentient beings achieve the bliss of bodhisattva-hood. Adherents of Mahayana Buddhism are found mainly in Vietnam, China, Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

Vajrayana, or the ‘Diamond Vehicle’, the third Buddhist tradition, emerged in India about the 6th century AD as an offshoot of the Mahayana, with claims to be the quickest way to salvation. The aim of Vajrayana is enlightenment right now, not at a remote future after many, many births. Its canonical texts, known as tantras, were at first accessible to only a chosen few initiated by a teacher who had obtained magical powers through meditation and other practices. Vajrayana holds that hidden in a human being are higher powers capable of being awakened by gurus, or teachers, who possess magical powers; the awakening of these powers enables a human being to realise his/her full potential. In the 7th century Vajrayana entered Tibet, where it took root and flourished under royal patronage. This branch of Buddhism is today readily associated with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan diaspora.

All three branches of Buddhism teach dhamma, anicca, anatta and karma: life is unsatisfactory; all component things are impermanent; there is no enduring self or soul; each sentient being is a result of one’s actions (karma).

As immigrant Buddhists settled in various areas of Australia, they established more temples, and the numbers of resident monasteries and visits by teachers from Buddhist countries in Asia increased. The Buddhist organisations in Australia are representative of the major traditions, such as Theravada, Mahayana (including Chinese, Vietnamese and Zen groups), Vajrayana (Tibetan) and non-sectarian (which includes Buddhist student organisations on university campuses). The early temples were small, reflecting the small communities they served and their limited resources. Often, they were old houses renovated with adaptations to serve as
places for worship and residences for monks. Larger temples and monasteries were established as the number of Buddhists of all traditions increased. Australia’s 570 Buddhist organisations, listed by the World Buddhist Directory in 2006, included monas-
teries, temples, retreat centres, places for meditation and hospices.

Australians of European background who are drawn to Buddhism and wish to learn more about it realise they cannot connect to the culturally deter-
ned practices in the temples of immigrant Bud-
dhists; Asian immigrant Buddhists and non-Asian Australians live in different cultural worlds. A few monasteries established during the past 25 years are bridging this gap. Two of them are in Western Australia, one in South Australia, two in New South Wales and one in Queensland. While these monasteries create the ideal spiritual environment for monks and nuns, they are also places that lay people in search of spiritual upliftment visit regu-
larly or occasionally.

The Bodhinyana Monastery, in Serpentine (70 kilometres south-west of Perth), is set on 39 hectares of rolling hills of the Darling Range. It was estab-
ilished in 1983 as a forest monastery in the Theravada tradition, by the Buddhist Society of Western Aus-
tralia (BSWA). Accommodation for each monk is a simple hut or bunk, of which there are 20 scattered over the property. There are also a medita-
tion hall, kitchen/dining room and accommodation for 11 guests. The current abbot of the monastery, Ajahn Brahm, is an Englishman who, having gradu-
ated in theoretical physics from Cambridge Uni-
versity, was working as a school teacher, when he ‘felt the urge for something spiritual’. So he went to Thailand, where Buddhist tradition permitted him to enter a monastery for a short period as a novice-
monk. When he discovered that a monk was what he wanted to be for the rest of his life, he trained for several years in the forest meditation tradition, to receive higher ordination as a monk. In 1981, BSWA invited him to assist a senior monk in teaching the Dhamma; three years later, when the senior monk died, Ajahn Brahm took over as Abbot of Bod-

hinyana, described as the largest Buddhist monastery in Australia. Several of the resident monks at Bod-

hinyana are of European origin. They are among the new generation of Westerners who are taking the Buddha’s teachings to Australians.

Bodhinyana is linked to the wider commu-
nity through BSWA, which has inputs into the monastery’s administration and functioning. While BSWA membership is open to Buddhists of all tradi-
tions, most of its current members are Theravadin imm\nigrants from Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Kampuchea and Laos. A small but significant num-
ber of the non-Asian Australian members are either Buddhist converts or have a serious interest to learn more about Buddhism. Bodhinyana includes in its pro-
grams activities of special interest to both these groups. Immigrant Buddhists can engage in the reli-
gious practices of their original homeland – celebrat-
ing festivals, such as Vesak, offer Buddha pâja (offering to the Buddha), earn merit for themselves and trans-
mit merit to departed loved ones by offering alms to monks.

For European-convert Buddhists who wish to engage in Buddhist practice shorn of ritual, and for sympathisers of Buddhism keen to learn about Buddhism, there are talks on the Bud-

da’s discourses, forums, guided meditation sessions and retreats. Activities are not compartmentalised. Immigrant Buddhists seek guided meditation and attend retreats, while Western Buddhists join immi-
grant Buddhists in the celebration of some festivals and in offering alms to monks as an act of generosity.

The Dhammarama Nuns Monastery was estab-
lished by the Buddhist Society of Western Australia in 1998, on 583 acres of natural bush land in Gidgee-
egrump, 45 kilometres north-west of Perth. As a train-
ing monastery for nuns in the forest tradition of Theravâda Buddhism, its objective is to enable lay women who wish to join the Sangha to get a foretaste of the monastic life, then decide whether to undertake training to be ordained as nuns who have accepted the 10 precepts listed in the Vinaya. Ajahn Vayama, who heads the monastery, is an Aus-

The monastery’s first trainee nun, Anagârikâ Eliza-
beth, was ordained as Sister Niñosha in May 2003 – the first 10-precept nun to be ordained in Western Australia.

There are also two forest monasteries in the Theravada tradition in Bundanoon, half-way between Canberra and Sydney.

The Nansén Temple (literally, ‘southern par-
dise temple’), on the outskirts of Wollongong, an industrial city 80 kilometres south of Sydney, is currently the most striking architectural expression of Mahâyana Buddhism in Australia. This temple and monastery complex was established in 1995 by Fo Guang Shan (The Buddha’s Light Mountain), a Mahâyana Buddhist sect founded in Taiwan in 1967 by the Venerable Master Hsing Yun. Fo Guang Shan claims that Nan Tien is the largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere, and that the site was chosen because Mount Kembla, in the proximity, has an auspicious resemblance to a recumbent lion. Among the styles of Buddhist architecture evident in the complex are the Chinese (the pagoda), Tibetan (the main temple, a multi-tiered complex set on top of a stone platform) and Japanese (the gardens). Nan Tien has on its grounds a motel-style facility with 100 rooms, which visitors can book into for short or long stays and learn more about Buddhism. Though the Nan Tien Temple is set on a smaller block of land than that of the Bodhinyana and the Dhammarama monasteries in Western Australia, its incumbrancy is larger – 20 nuns reside there.

The Tibetan Buddhist presence in Australia began with the visit in 1974 by Lama Thubten Yeshi and Lama Thubten Zopa, founders of the Founda-
tion for the Preservation of the Mahâyana Tradi-
tion (FPMT), to conduct the first Tibetan medita-
tion course on Australian soil in Mooballaba, in Queensland’s Diamond Valley. In 1975, they estab-
lished Australia’s first FPMT centre – the Chen-
rezig Institute – in Exford, Queensland. The FPMT was founded in the United States in 1975, with its international head office in Portland (Oregon), to make known the Mahâyana Buddhist tradition worldwide through teaching, meditation courses and community service. Its 25 centres across Australia, including teaching and retreat centres, study groups, monastic communities and hospices, reflect its many activities.

Nowhere in Australia will the public face of Tibetan Buddhism be more evident than in Bendigo, a major commercial town in central Victoria. There, the FPMT is building the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion, described as what will be the largest stupa in the western world. Fifty square metres at the base and rising to a height of 48 metres, it is modelled on the Great Stupa in Gaya, in southern Bihar, consecrated in 1474. There are plans for the construction of a monastery, meditation centre, hospice and accommodation for the lay community on a site adjacent to the stupa. When construction has been completed some years hence, the Great Stupa is expected to draw thousands of pilgrims and visitors each year from all over Australia and over-
seas. His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, visited Bendigo on 7 June 2007 to bless the site of the Great Stupa.

The five visits to Australia by the 14th Dalai Lama – in 1982, 1992, 1996, 2002 and 2007 – stirred considerable interest in Buddhism, especially Tibetan Buddhism, among Australians. There is no record in history of any other Buddhist monk having travelled so widely, enjoyed such celebrity

Abbees Ven. Machsin and staff in the garden of Nan Tien Temple and Monastery, Berkeley, New South Wales.

PHOTO ELIZABETH GILLIAM.

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status and drawn such large crowds of people from diverse faiths and cultures as the 14th Dalai Lama. An Australian advertising firm’s slogan—‘You missed Jesus. You missed the Buddha. Do not miss the Dalai Lama’—encapsulated the fascination the Tibetan Buddhist leader held for many people during his 1996 Australian visit. In 2007, during a crowded 10-day tour, the Dalai Lama was the drawcard at an international seminar in Sydney. Three thousand people paid the event organisers handsomely to hear him speak on happiness—a theme that resonated with the audiences he addressed in seven Australian cities.

While the missionary spirit of FPMT’s lamas is evident in the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in Australia, Zen Buddhism came as an import, first through books written by the internationally distinguished authority on the subject, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870–1966), and later as a result of action by a small group of interested people. Australia’s first lasting Zen group, the Sydney Zen Centre (SZC), was established in 1975 by a few Australians who had been introduced to this Mahayana sect by Robert Ariken Roshi, during visits to Hawaii. Ariken, a United States citizen, became interested in Zen when he was held prisoner in Japan during the Second World War. After the war he practiced Zen training in California with a Japanese teacher and later continued his training in Japan with a Zen master. In 1959, he and his wife, Anne, founded the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii. Twenty years later, the SZC established a close association with the Diamond Sangha when Ariken responded to its invitation to lead the first Australian Zen retreat.

In 1996, Sobhana Barraghgi, the current senior teacher at the SZC, became the first Australian woman to receive transmission as a Roshi, or Zen master, from her teachers John Tarrant Roshi and Robert Ariken Roshi. She founded the Kuan Yin Zen Centre in Lismore, in northern New South Wales, and teaches intensive Zen at centres in Australia. Michelle Spiker’s field-research-based thesis provides a wealth of information on the establishment and functioning of the Diamond Sangha in Australia. She points out in her Development in Australian Buddhism that members of the Diamond Sangha groups in Australia are primarily Anglo-Saxon middle-class professionals aged 25 to 70 years of age. Gender distribution is about equal. English is used in ritual. There is emphasis on equality between the sexes. In each Australian Diamond Sangha group, a democratically elected board is in charge of administrative matters. While a number of different Zen Buddhist groups with Japanese origins have been established in Australia, Diamond Sangha affiliates make up the largest group.

Though many groups and organisations representative of all the various traditions of Buddhism have proliferated in Australia, they have not come together in a strong ecumenical body. This is, because, firstly, Buddhists have neither a central authority nor overarching religious institutions to bring devotees of all branches and sects together for specific activities. Secondly, as each immigrant group practices a particular form of Buddhism in order to retain its spiritual and cultural needs and to reinforce its identity, none of them sees any need to reach out to other Buddhist groups. Each migrant group is mainly concerned with re-creating in the new homelands the religious practices of the country of birth of its members. Each group prefers the ethnic approach to the broader pan-Buddhist. Thirdly, there is the cultural diversity of people belonging to the various traditions and their different religious practices. One or other of the traditions— Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana—is dominant in some of the Asian countries. In Australia all three traditions and their further offshoots are meeting on common ground after several centuries of separate development in their respective homelands. So, for instance, as Vietnamese and Taiwanese Mahayana Buddhists are not familiar with the practices of Thai and Sri Lankan Buddhists, they would feel most comfortable when performing their religious practices and rituals within their own community, and Sri Lankan Buddhists are not familiar with Tibetan Buddhism. There is no evidence of discord among all the many varieties of Buddhists. It is just that as members of a large family they migrated to different countries, adapted themselves and their cultures (including religio) to those countries, and now, having been brought together as migrant settlers in Australia after a long time apart, they have to adopt modes of communicating with each other.

Inter-tradition communication has begun. Buddhist organisations of the three traditions are identifying activities in which they can co-operate to good purpose. As would be expected with the passage of years, the need felt by ethnic Buddhists to establish identity through religious practice is giving way to a broader, pan-Buddhist approach that gives them greater authority when, for instance, at the invitation of the wider community they express views on matters of special interest. Thus, a step to bring Buddhist organisations in the various Australian states and territories together for consultative purposes was taken in May 2003, when representatives of the Buddhist Councils of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria met in Calamvale (Queensland) to establish the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils (FABC) ‘to promote the teachings of the Buddha in Australia, and to facilitate the recognition of Buddhism as a designated religion by the various governmental and non-governmental organisations’. The Buddhist Councils of South Australia and Western Australia have since joined the Federation.

The Buddhist Councils affiliated to the FABC represent some 160 temples and monasteries. There is still some way to go, as the total number of Buddhist institutions in Australia—temples, monasteries, meditation retreats, study centres, associations of students, hospices and community service organisations—is estimated to be 570. Among the FABC’s aims, besides the two stated above, are to act as the national representative body of Buddhist Councils of each state and territory in Australia, to liaise with, lobby and deal with the government, to express the Buddhist view on social and ethical matters, to foster a spirit of fellowship, co-operation and goodwill among all Buddhist groups in Australia, to undertake community service and to co-operate with other religious groups in work for peace and harmony.

Some detractors of Buddhism describe it as a religion with emphasis on individual striving and individual happiness, with little concern for helping people to cope with social and economic problems in their day-to-day lives. Perhaps one reason for this perception is the low profile of various Buddhist organisations engaged in social work, in contrast to the high visibility of the firmly established human-aid organisations run by various Christian denominations. In a useful study, The Buddha is in the Street: Engaged Buddhism in Australia, Patricia Sherwood writes about ‘the unspoken and unacknowledged images of Buddhism in Australia’... the images of Buddhism as a socially transforming force in prisons, in palliative care, in education, among the poor and needy, working with drug addicts, in the human rights arena...’ She tracked down over 120 Buddhist organisations in Australia (in 2003) and did 12 case studies to explore ‘the richness and diversity of their contribution to social change processes’. An analysis of the social work done by Buddhist organisations revealed that 96 per cent of them were engaged in adult education, 64 per cent in the education of children and 61 per cent in palliative care. Other areas of social work were fundraising for the poor in Australia and overseas (61 per cent of organisations), working with the sick in hospitals (74 per cent), visiting prisons (59 per cent), working with people who have problems with alcohol and other drugs (24 per cent), speaking up for human rights (24 per cent) and compassionate activities on behalf of non-human sentient beings (11 per cent).

European-Australians drawn to Buddhism, either as converts or as sympathisers, belong mainly to the educated middle and upper-middle classes. A member of this class, Geoff Gallop, premier of Western Australia from 2001–06, describes his attraction to Buddhism as follows:

There is no doubt that Buddhism has an enormous capacity to assist humanity meet the challenges of the day through its non-dogmatic approach,
therefore is steadfast in science, its understanding of interrelationships, its commitment to a life based on the middle way involving morality, meditation and wisdom, its support for human dignity, popular control and the public good, and its belief in peace and dialogue between people and their religions.\footnote{Gally (2006: 4)}

It is not possible to ascertain how many of Australia’s Buddhists are converts, since the Australian Census does not provide such information. However, there is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest that some Australians who declared they held no religious beliefs would be ‘night-stand Buddhists’, a term coined by United States academic Thomas Tweed to describe his compatriots who meditate at night and have sympathy for Buddhism, but do not claim to have embraced it to the exclusion of other religions. In the absence of a methodology to scrutinise the lives of individual convert Buddhists and sympathisers of Buddhism, we have to fall back on anecdotal evidence to describe night-stand Buddhists as those who meditate to overcome stress or cope with a disaster, to be a better person or to be happy. Meditation is the one Buddhist practice that draws together all convert Buddhists and sympathisers. Their commitment to meditation varies. They also read books and journal articles on Buddhism, attend lectures and scour Buddhist sites on the internet. They may have a plaster-coat head of the Buddha in their study. The Buddha appeals to them for his sayings, as a remarkable thinker who invited people in search of truth to test his teachings rather than accept them in blind faith, and a supremely compassionate being who centuries after his death inspired some of the finest works of art in every Asian tradition. Writing about Buddhism in Australia in The Bulletin (5 June 2007; 23), Julie-Anne Davies points out that ‘Buddhism has been accused of being the religion you’re having when you’re not having a religion‘. And, there are ‘plenty more people out there who don’t identify themselves as Buddhists but still adopt some of its practices, most notably meditation’.\footnote{Gally (2006: 4)}

A small member of non-Asian Australian Dhamma practitioners identify themselves as members of a sangha, as defined by them (below). These lay practitioners have little or no contact with the monastic world. They do not identify themselves as Theravadin, Mahayanaist or Mahayanaist, though some might have an orientation towards the meditation practice of one of these Buddhism traditions. Some positively renounce sectarian identification, saying they practice one Dhamma. Secular Dhamma practice is referred to by practitioners simply as the way of life undertaken by someone who is inspired by the teachings of the Buddha. In drawing a distinction between religious Buddhism (that is, the religion of immigrant Buddhists) and Dhamma practice, non-Asian Australian Buddhists mention, among others, Stephen Batchelor, whose writings have been influential in the West in pointing the way to a non-denominational Buddhism.

Batchelor was born in Scotland and educated in England and in Tibetan and Zen Buddhist monasteries in India, Korea and Switzerland. From 1976 to February 1984, when he dissolved, he was a monk in both the Zen and Tibetan Buddhism traditions. He now lives in France and spends several months each year travelling worldwide to lead meditation retreats and teach the Dhamma. As Dhamma practitioners are in the habit of questioning all propositions, which is what the Buddha advised his listeners to do, they do not regard the writings of Batchelor or anyone else as sacrosanct. They do, however, share Batchelor’s vision of the Buddha as someone who exhorted humans to understand the unsatisfactory nature of human existence and taught them something to practise rather than something to believe in. Rituals are eschewed and attachment to a particular Buddhist tradition – Theravada, Mahayana or Vajrayana – is not considered necessary. There is little interest in the practice, prevalent especially among immigrant Theravada Buddhists, of giving alms to monks in order to earn merit and ensure a good life in the next birth. Rather than regarding awakening or awareness of the true nature of things as a remote goal, they believe it is something worth striving for in this life. A contrast is drawn between religious Buddhists and ‘Dhamma practice’.

Two Sydney academics who identify themselves as ‘veteran Dhamma practitioners’ have described the development of this trend in Australia, especially in the country’s south-east (Bubna-Litic and Higgins, 2000). At first, say Bubna-Litic and Higgins, Australian convert Buddhists were drawn to institutions of Asian Buddhist migrants, who arrived in considerable numbers from the 1970s onwards, and established institutions to practise their religion and to uphold their ethnic identity. Each group – European-Australian Buddhists and Asian-born Buddhists – engaged in practices of their own, exemplifying ‘intersection without interaction’ in a term coined by Nunnich (1996) to describe the meeting of Asian Buddhist immigrants and United States converts in temples.

Monastics and lay Dhamma practitioners, especially in Sydney, co-operated to share facilities such as halls and libraries for meetings, study and retreats. Then, two decades after the intersection, tensions arising between the two groups made cohabitation extremely difficult. Bubna-Litic and Higgins state that this was because the administration of institutions – mostly Theravadin – was authoritarian; decisions made by people at the top were to be implemented without questioning. Women were marginalised. European-Australian Buddhists wanted monasteries to be run on democratic lines, with transparent decision-making processes and complete gender equality. Dhamma practitioners contended that the lower status given to nuns in the Vinaya could not be attributed to the Buddha; rather, it was a later interpolation.\footnote{In 2005, which Bubna-Litic and Higgins describe as a watershed year for European-Australian Buddhists engaged in insight (Vipassana) meditation in Australia’s eastern seaboard, a new organisation, Sydney Insight Meditators (SIM) was established (Bubna-Litic and Higgins, 1996: 10). Its aim was to invite local, interstate and overseas teachers to give talks and lead retreats on a sustainable scale in and around Sydney. SIM, whilst not attaching itself to any}
teacher, acts as an umbrella organisation for several lay sangha in Sydney – the Bluegum, the Tortoise Mountain and Golden Water sangha. Two of these names derive from a native Australian tree prominent in the area of Sydney where the sangha meets: Bluegum and an abundant one on Sydney’s North Shore as Golden Waters are in Bronte, an eastern suburb. The Tortoise Mountain sangha is in the Blue Mountains, about 60 kilometres west of Sydney. The Bluegum sangha uses as its text book *The Life of the Buddha* by Bhikkhu Nananodi, a biography based on the sutras, or the Buddha’s discourses. ‘To their surprise,’ says Bhuma-Liz and Higgins, ‘long-time insight students have found themselves not simply learning the art of reading sutras, but also acquainting themselves with a radically different sense of the founder himself.’ Though at first membership of the lay sangha in Sydney comprised Europeans; recently Australians of Indian and Chinese origin have joined it.

The Insight Teachers Circle of Australia (ITCA), which also comes under SIM’s umbrella, claims to be the largest group of lay Buddhist teachers in Australia, with its 18 members resident in Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns, the Northern Rivers, Adelaide, Alice Springs and Perth. Vipassana bhavana, or insight meditation, has an important place in Dharma practice in Australia and elsewhere in the Western world. The Buddha discovered Vipassana bhavana and described it in a discourse, the *Satipatthana sutta*. Bhikkhu Rahula points out that this is the most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development. It helps to cleanse the mind of impurities and cultivate qualities such as concentration, joy and tranquility, leading the practitioner to perception of the ultimate truth, to nirvana.

The Australian Insight Meditation Network gives a different emphasis. It states on its website, dharma.org.au, that insight meditation:

refers to both Buddhist meditation practices and a Western form of Buddhism…free from ritual. There are many styles of insight meditation and teachers with different approaches. A common thread is that they all have a focus on settling the mind, developing a level of clarity and looking carefully at one’s experience. Aims of insight meditation include coming to a deep understanding of who we are, and finding a sense of connection with, and compassion for, all sentient beings.

Lay insight meditation practice in New South Wales became institutionalised in the mid-1970s with the establishment of two Buddhist communities – Bodhi Farm and the Dharmamāndala Community – near Lismore, in a major dairying area in northern New South Wales. These two communities, whose properties adjut, continue to thrive. Meetings of the lay sangha are informal. There is no formal membership, no ritual, no ceremony and no yellow robe in sight. Anyone can attend, with the only requirement being that they should be able to sit still for 45 minutes. People are encouraged to attend retreats in order to improve their meditation practice. The senior insight meditation teachers are members of ITCA.

The migration of Vipassanā to the English-speaking world began when lay people in the United States studied it in Myanmar and Thailand and returned home to instruct others. Some of the first generation of Western insight teachers, whose influence extends to Australia, were ordained in Myanmar, Thailand and sometimes in Sri Lanka in the 1960s and 1970s, and practised there for years. They returned on returning to their homelands and established retreat centres, notably Gaia House (England), the Insight Meditation Society (Barre, Massachusetts, in the United States) and Spirit Rock (California, United States). These lay teachers take the place of the monastic sangha in Western countries.

Subhāna Baraghi informs Australian insight meditators that her understanding of the *sangha* is as follows:

To take refuge in the Sangha has many layers of meaning. It is broader than just taking refuge in the monastic Sangha; it is taking refuge in the community of like-minded practitioners who support one another along this ancient and noble path. It is to grow and mature in friends, so that we can each be a good spiritual friend and mentor to others.

Winston Higgins elaborates as follows on Baraghi’s description in an interview with this writer:

Sangha essentially means community – in the dharma world. Today’s large-scale monastic orders are a far cry from the small questing Sanghas of the Buddha’s time. The Buddha did not expect monks to go forth and build huge monasteries and institutionalised power structures that arrogated to themselves a privileged position in dharma practice, teaching and transmission. The modern age is not friendly to monasticism of any kind. As well, post-Protestant western countries do not have a cultural heritage of monasticism, making it doubly difficult to establish a viable monastic tradition in countries like Australia, the USA and Britain. As the overwhelming majority of Western dharma practitioners are lay people, living in modern conditions, they are not likely to be drawn into essentially medieval institutions. We need forms of association that fit in with our way of life and affirm our positive values.

I deeply respect those who ordain in order to pursue monasticism as another way of life that may, or may not, be the ‘fast lane’ to full awakening. That’s a valid choice. However, this is not to say that monasticism is the be-all of dharma transmission and therefore innately superior to whole-hearted lay practice.

As noted above, the early European-Australian Buddhists – in the 1950s and 1960s – sought ordained monks to explain to them the Buddha’s teachings; there were talks and discussions. Now, meditation is the practice many Anglo-Australian Buddhists are engaged in; meditation is regarded as a therapy for some of the serious ills of modern life, especially stress, and as a practice that helps one to cope with disasters, to have meaningful relations with fellow humans and to be prepared for a good death. Lay people who have expressed their commitment to the Five Precepts are aware of the Four Noble Truths, tread the Noble Eightfold Path and spend several years training in Buddhist practices qualify for acceptance as meditation teachers. And as they are employed in a trade or profession, they do not have to be maintained in temples and monasteries.

European-Australian Buddhists have little interest in establishing such institutions as these require a considerable number of *dāpayana*, or community of lay supporters, to ensure that the day-to-day material needs of monks are supplied and buildings maintained. As Theravāda monks and nuns are required by the Vinaya to be mendicant, they have to depend upon lay supporters for alms. Immigrant Buddhists regard support of monks and participation in temple rituals as the best ways of accumulating a store of merit to ensure them a good life in their next birth. Anglo-Australian Buddhists express little interest in the next birth; their interest is in a satisfactory life leading to liberation in this birth. When they wish to, they invite a monk of their choice from a temple of immigrant Buddhists, or an overseas visiting monk, to teach at retreats. They do this while distancing themselves from the rituals of immigrant Buddhists. While engaged in meditation as a lay practice, many Anglo-Australian Buddhists feel they are being free to move from one Buddhist tradition to another – to ‘Dhamma hop’ and make up a Buddhist belief system of their own.

Ajaīna Brahmin is firm about what the sangha means to a Theravāda monk. In an article titled ‘The Meaning of Sangha’, posted on the website of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia, he states that:

the monastic Sangha is the physical expression of the Lord Buddha’s Middle Way’ and that ‘the authority on Buddhism lies with the monastic Sangha is demonstrated when one considers that only one who is practicing the dhamma, and uprooting sensuality, has the authority to teach others to do the same. A sexually active lay Buddhist who enjoys good food and entertainment while amassing worldly possessions and who teaches others to
let go of attachments is called a hypocrite; one who does not practice what they teach. They have no authority. It is true that some monks also qualify as hypocrites here, but they are more easily shown up for what they are than the lay teacher with far fewer rules.

Can there be Buddhism without the monastic sangha? The Buddha was probably the first religious thinker to found an order of celibate monks and exhort them to spread his teaching. All Buddhist traditions accept the centrality of the three jewels: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the monastic sangha. During its long history, Buddhism has embedded itself remarkably well in a variety of cultures, some of which have sophisticated belief systems strongly supported by the ruling class. Some observers of Buddhism in the United States have expressed concerns about whether lay people can combine running a household with Dhamma practice in pursuit of the extraordinary goal of enlightenment — in the sole search of which for centuries in Asia celibate monks and nuns secluded themselves in monasteries.

The cybersangha, or the Dhamma on the internet, which many thousands of people search to learn about what the Buddha taught, is a very recent development. One of the world’s greatest online resources for information on Buddhism is www.buddhanet.net — operates from the Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery, in Tullara, near Lismore in northern New South Wales. An Australian monk, Bhikkhu Pannayaro, established the website in Sydney in 1992 and moved to the present site in 2005. The 800,000 or more people who access the website daily from all over the world include children, lay people in search of information within their range of understanding, research students and scholars looking to download the Buddha’s discourses. Most of the users identify themselves as non-Buddhists.

Buddhanet’s webmaster is Bhikkhu Pannayaro. He received higher ordination in Thailand and spent some years in intensive meditation practice in Burma and Sri Lanka. On his return to Sydney in 1992, he established the Buddha Dharma Education Association, which apart from being a web server, also conducts meditation retreats, talks and discussions. He has come to be known as the ‘e-monk’. Information technologists in Australia, Asia, Europe and the United States work as volunteers for Buddhanet, on tasks such as entering information and computer graphics. At present, Buddhanet has over 150 e-books, mainly the Buddha’s discourses and commentaries on them, as well as directories of Buddhist organizations worldwide, audio files on meditation, chanting and advice on caring for the dying and the bereaved. There is an emphasis on entering information of the highest quality.

are taking firm root in this environment. There are also members of the wider sangha, as accepted by Australian Dharma practitioners and European sympathisers of Buddhism. A non-Asian Buddhist, Laurence Mills, believes that in time there will emerge a non-sectarian Australian sangha made up of native-born Australians ordained as monks in the manner begun by the Buddha. This home-grown sangha, says Mills, will reach out to the wider community and take away from Buddhism the ‘foreignness’ that seems to inhibit many Australians from openly identifying with it. He adds: ‘It will take time. Remember it took several centuries for Buddhism to establish itself in China. It shouldn’t take that long now in Australia as methods of communication now are far more advanced than they were two millennia ago.’

Mills, a Briton, was drawn to Buddhism when he read a book on Buddhism by Christmas Humphries, founder of the British Buddhist Society. In 1959, he entered the London Buddhist Vihara as a novice under Bhikkhu Bodhissatta, before going to India the following year to learn Pali, the Buddhist teachings and practices at the Mahabodhi temple in Bangalore. Three years later, he received higher ordination as a monk of the Theravada tradition, with the name of Khantipalo, and went to Bangkok to spend the next 10 years in a temple there. In April 1973, he arrived in Sydney at the invitation of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales. He travelled extensively across Australia, teaching and helping to revive Buddhist associations that had become dormant, establishing new institutions, the best known of which is the forest monastery at Wiseman’s Ferry, on the outskirts of Sydney. He disbanded in 1991 and now lives as a lay Buddhist near Cairns, in north Queensland, teaching the Dhamma to a small group of people and translating Pali texts into English.

Many developments are yet to unfold as Buddhism adapts to its Australian homeland. Rather than trying themselves to a particular Buddhist tradition, it seems likely that non-Asian Australians will look at them all to take what they consider best for their spiritual journey. It is extremely unlikely that a distinctly Australian Buddhism will emerge, since internet websites take the Buddha’s teaching and interpretations of it across all boundaries to a global audience. These easily accessed networks greatly influence the thinking of Australian convert Buddhists and those interested in learning about Buddhism, its different traditions and practices. The Buddhism that immigrants bring will be transformed by values of the host country and by generational change. Regardless of the special characteristics the two Buddhisms — that of immigrants and of non-Asian Australians — acquire during the decades to come, they will surely reflect the yearnings of people for spiritual development through an understanding of the Buddha’s teachings, the unsatisfactoriness of life, the causes of the unsatisfactoriness and the path to full awakening.

D.S. ABEYAGUNAWARDENA

Entrance gate to Indo-Chinese temple, Mt Pritchard, New South Wales. Photo Elizabeth Gilliam.