13 April 2020

**Closure of places of worship and the offering of dana**

**(Update)**

Following the announcement from the Deputy Chief Health Officer, from noon 23rd March 2020 places of worship are now closed to the public. All Buddhist temples should now be acting in accordance with this directive.

**The offering of meals** through the practice of dana needs to change to comply with directives from the government. Lay devotees attending a temple and offering food or preparing food on the premises should be aware this has the potential to spread infection from the outside community to the temple.

**For temples and monasteries**, where monastics and lay members of the temple prepare food onsite (predominantly Mahayana and Vajrayana temples):

You may be able to continue providing meals as usual. However, to keep to government rules

* make sure to practise social distancing in the preparation and the serving of food
* the serving of food should not involve physical contact
* the guideline below for Theravada temples may be useful

F**or Theravada temples where food is brought to the temples:**

You may need to adapt how you offer meals through the practice of dana. These suggestions come from the Buddhist Council of Victoria.

* Prepare the dana offering beforehand and bring it to the temple.
* If you are leaving food, put it in a clean, secure location that meets social distancing guidelines.
* Do not have lay persons remaining at the temple after offering.
* Only two persons present at any one time.
* Consider having dana provided by a core group of persons who can:
* maintain contact with an organizer
* advise if they are unwell and cease their involvement

This is not a requirement. It is up to individual temples to determine. The central principle is to keep the number of contacts between persons to a minimum.

In the event that there is are further restrictions, it may be necessary for temples to issue a letter of authorisation to persons distributing dana. Our understanding is that in this instance those delivering dana may be considered to be a charitable food service.

Sangha may need to consider whether in these circumstances the Vinaya would allow the offering of food in bulk for freezing and later re-use.

Basic hygiene protocols for food preparation can be found at:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety/food-businesses/covid-19-and-food-business>

For general information on the coronavirus go to:

[https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/novelcoronavirus)