

We Recognise Good Work in the Community

Three outstanding members of the Victorian community were recognised at this year's UN Vesak celebration at the Melbourne Town Hall on 3 May with Dharmachakra Awards. These were Frank Carter in the category of Advancing Education and Dr Sarvesh Soni and Vivienne Nguyen, Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, for Promoting Interfaith Harmony.



From left to right: Simon Kearney - MC, Dinesh Weerakkody - BCV President and recipients Dr Sarvesh Soni, Rev. Helen Summers who collected her award from 2024 as she was absent last year, Vivienne Nguyen and Frank Carter.

The BCV established the awards last year to recognise outstanding contributions to civilizing principles and to Buddhism in Victoria. Recipients in 2024 were Anh Nguyen and Chan Nguyen, prison chaplains, for Providing Compassionate Service; Andrea Furness from the Daylesford Dharma School and Lama Tendar from the Medicine Buddha Centre for Advancing Education; and Rev. Helen Summers for Promoting Interfaith Harmony.

Contact:

Buddhist Council of Victoria
36 McDowall St
Mitcham VIC 3132

T: 0422 961 162
Outside Australia
+61 422 961 162

[https://bcv.org.au/
contact-us/](https://bcv.org.au/contact-us/)

[administrator@
bcv.org.au](mailto:administrator@bcv.org.au)

Inside:

Promoting Healthy Family Relationships.....2

The Problem of Duck Hunting3

Building Peace - The Murmuration of Birds....4

BCV Membership.....4

BCV News Editor
Dr Diana Cousens, OAM
BCV Interfaith
Coordinator, Project
Manager Healthy Family
Relationships Project

Please sign our petition at
Change.org asking the
Victorian Premier to ban
duck shooting.
[https://bcv.org.au/end-duck-
hunting-in-victoria-in-2023/](https://bcv.org.au/end-duck-hunting-in-victoria-in-2023/)

Family Violence Support
contact these services:

1800 737 732
1800RESPECT

Safe Steps
[https://www.safesteps.org.
au/about-us/contact-us/](https://www.safesteps.org.au/about-us/contact-us/)

Review of Multiculturalism in Victoria

The BCV has contributed to the review of multiculturalism in Victoria including meeting with the Chair, Georg Lekakis. We requested operational funding as a peak body so as to ensure the continuity of service. We are on call at all times to advise the government on both policies and crises. We would like to see all parties promote non-discrimination and equality as core values. We are concerned that the BLIA's Buddha's Day festival has been defunded. We propose that it is usually by giving a positive experience of different cultures that community acceptance for diversity is found. We hope that more funding will be found for interfaith dialogue, which helps to build relationships between communities.

All Temples Must Implement Child Safety Standards

All temples and centres must implement Child Safety Standards as these are legal requirements for faith organisations in Victoria. All children have the right to feel safe and to be safe all the time, but safety does not just happen. A child safe organisation takes deliberate steps to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect. It puts children's safety and wellbeing first and embeds a commitment to child safety in every aspect of the organisation. A child safe organisation fosters and demonstrates openness. This means that the temple has thought about risks and has someone in charge of child safety who ensures procedures are followed. Everyone needs to know who they can speak to if they are worried about child safety, including children and young people. Temples can put up posters on walls or doors and have flyers available.

All temples must develop a Code of Conduct so as to provide adults with clear guidance on the behaviour that is expected of them and of the behaviours that are unacceptable. Temples need to be able to recognise unacceptable behaviour and have a plan of action if there is a breach of the code. This applies to both staff and volunteers.

See: Commission for Children and Young People - <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/>

Promoting Healthy Family Relationships

Find out more at:
https://bcv.org.au/fvp_home/
 Modules: <https://bcvedu.org/>



In Australia more than one woman per week is killed by a current or former domestic partner and the incidence is increasing.

The numbers of women killed in recent years:

2024 - 78

2023 - 64

2022 - 56

2021 - 44

Source: Counting Dead Women, Destroy the Joint.

The Healthy Family Relationships Project has created three modules to assist faith leaders to train in supporting victims and survivors of family violence. If you have difficult conversations with people in trouble and would like to support them with better resources, then it is a good idea to do the three modules which can be accessed on the BCV website for free. There will also be a completion certificate for anyone who completes the modules. Assisting people skilfully will save lives.

You can train in our new modules: <https://bcvedu.org/>
 E: administrator@bcv.org.au

Since 2019 the BCV has implemented a program funded by the State Government of Victoria to promote healthy family relationships. The program seeks to build the capacity of Buddhist faith leaders and the community to effectively prevent and respond to family violence. It operates under the three principles of Recognise, Respond and Refer, and these are explained below. Access modules at <https://bcvedu.org/>

Recognise

Family violence takes many forms and while physical violence is easily recognised there are other forms of abuse such as emotional or financial abuse, neglect and verbal abuse. Actions that undermine a person's well being, such as taking control of their finances without consent, or calling a person names like stupid or worthless, or neglecting their basic needs, or in any way humiliating or undermining a person, are all abusive actions. Sometimes these actions are not recognised as abuse but they are hurtful and harmful. A person who has been harmed in these ways may suffer anxiety, trauma and a sense of disempowerment. They may become socially isolated and having difficulty trusting others. The first step in overcoming abuse is in recognising when it is taking place.

Respond

When someone tells you about violence or abuse it can be hard for them to speak because they may feel scared, ashamed, or confused. How you respond can help them feel stronger or it can make them feel worse. That's why it's important to respond in a kind and helpful way. Remember, you don't have to solve the problem or give advice. You are not expected to do that because you are not a counsellor, a lawyer, or a police officer. But you can listen, support, and refer them to the right services. That alone is very powerful. You can follow three simple steps when someone shares their problems with you:

1. Listen – Let them speak. Don't interrupt.
2. Believe what they say and don't judge.
3. Support and help them feel safe. Don't tell them what to do.

Refer

A referral is the act of connecting someone to a professional service. These services might provide safe accommodation, such as a women's refuge. They might offer legal support or counselling or just someone to talk to. Referrals matter because family violence is often complex and dangerous. Trained professionals understand the risks, legal systems, and trauma responses far better than the average person. Many people facing violence feel isolated, ashamed or afraid. A referral provides choices and can restore a sense of control. There are some respectful phrases that you can use such as, "There are free, confidential services that can help—would you like their number?" "You don't have to go through this alone."

Key Support Services in Victoria

1800RESPECT is the national family and sexual violence support service. It provides confidential counselling and information and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The phone number is 1800 737 732 and the website is <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

The Orange Door is a free service for adults, children, and young people experiencing or at risk of family violence. It provides safety planning, housing support, and referrals and has centres all over Victoria. <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>

Safe Steps is open every day of the year, including public holidays. The phone number is 1800 015 188 and it is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. E: safesteps@safesteps.org.au

Lifeline provides counselling to anyone in crisis. Call 13 11 14 or chat online: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/>

Headspace provides support for young people aged 12-25 with mental health challenges. Find a centre near you through their website or by calling 1800 595 212, <https://headspace.org.au/>

The Problem of Duck Hunting in Victoria

Australia is in a climate and biodiversity crisis, and wetlands are under pressure across the country. With recent climate change modelling projecting more extreme weather events, declining waterbird populations continue to face mounting challenges – exacerbated by the unnecessary and significant threat posed by recreational hunting. Instead of directing their efforts to reducing these threats and protecting biodiversity, it's disappointing to see the Victorian government support the continuation of this brutal, unsustainable activity.

Mandy Bamford, President, BirdLife Australia

Victoria is one of the few Australian states to allow the shooting of native waterbirds for fun and the BCV is actively campaigning to end this brutal and violent hobby. In February 2023 we delivered a petition addressed to the Victorian Premier with 13,500 signatures and it was received by two MPs, Gary Maas and Steve McGhie, the Cabinet Secretary. Our petition on change.org now has over 30,000 signatures but unfortunately duck hunting continues.

The day after our petition was received it was announced that the number of days of the annual season, the number of hours per day and the number of birds per 'bag' would be reduced, and an inquiry into duck shooting would take place. While these reductions were welcomed we were saddened that the season went ahead. The state government inquiry into 'Recreational Native Bird Hunting' reported in August 2023 and had eight recommendations. The first recommendation was:

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Victorian Government ends the annual recreational native bird hunting season opening on all public and private land from 2024.

In spite of this recommendation to end duck hunting the State Government decided to permit it to continue in 2024 and 2025. This is a deeply disappointing result and questions must be asked as to the purpose of inquiries when their recommendations are ignored. Not only that, the hopeful signs of limiting the killing that were shown with the reduction in days and bag numbers have been reversed. In 2023 the season lasted for 35 days, in 2024 the season lasted for 57 days but this year, 2025, the season ran for 83 days. In 2023 hunters were allowed four birds per day, in 2024 hunters were allowed six birds per day but in 2025 hunters were allowed nine birds per day. All the numbers are going in the wrong direction.

Similarly, while in 2024 it was not allowed to shoot two endangered birds, the Hardhead and the Blue-winged Shoveler, in 2025 restrictions on killing Hardhead ducks were removed. It has to be remembered that much of Victoria has been in drought over the past few years and the number of all kinds of birds has decreased. This is a period where native birds should receive maximum protection, rather than being subject to being killed for sport.

Every year hundreds of fully protected species are killed during the duck hunting season. In 2025 volunteer wildlife rescuers retrieved 292 dead or injured birds, including 47 protected and 17 threatened species. Sadly, among the retrieved birds were 12 Freckled Ducks, one of Australia's rarest waterbirds. Additionally, in spite of the ban on lead bullets they are found in waterways after shooting and cause significant pollution as well as harm to humans and animals. The government inquiry acknowledged the animal welfare concerns arising from wounding rates, the exclusion of non-hunters from approximately 3.5 million hectares of land during the season, and the inability to enforce compliance with regulations on hunters owing to the large area covered by native bird hunting and a lack of knowledge of when and where hunting is occurring. In spite of this duck hunting continues. The inquiry noted that only 0.4% of the Victorian population have duck hunting licences and only 0.26% participate in any year. However, approximately 320,000 - 390,000 birds die each year in Victoria in the hunting season. Many more are wounded, wetlands are damaged and habitat is reduced.

The Buddhist Council of Victoria joins with Animals Australia and BirdLife Australia to request the state government to end the hunting of native waterbirds in Victoria.

Birds it is legal to kill in Victoria during duck hunting season:



The Chestnut Teal



The Grey Teal



The Pacific Black Duck



The Mountain Duck (Shelduck)

And also the:

- Pink-eared Duck
- Wood Duck
- Hardhead Duck

For more information on the problems of duck hunting see BirdLife Australia - <https://birdlife.org.au/> and Animals Australia - <https://animalsaustralia.org/> Photos - <https://ebird.org/home>

The Method of the Murmuration of Birds

Keynote Speech at the UN Day of Vesak, Parliament House, Canberra
Dr Di Cousins, OAM, BCV Interfaith Coordinator, 14 May 2025 (Extract)

Milestones

Our thanks to Ven. Hojun Futen who has recently retired as the BCV Senior Chaplain. We are grateful for his 12 years as a chaplain and his incredible contribution to the pastoral care of Buddhist prisoners and hospital patients throughout Victoria, as well as his training of new chaplains and his leadership role as the Senior Chaplain. There are now opportunities to train as a chaplain. Email: administrator@bcv.org.au

New Pope Leo 14th

We congratulate the Roman Catholic Church on the appointment of Pope Leo 14th on 8 May 2025. He is the first pope to have been born in North America and he also holds Peruvian citizenship. As a cardinal he engaged with issues such as climate change, global migration and human rights.



Condolences on the loss of Air India Flight 171

We are very saddened to hear of the terrible plane crash that occurred in Ahmedabad on 12 June 2025. We are shocked at this terrible loss of life and send our sympathy to the friends and relatives of those who perished and offer our prayers and support. We hope all may find strength at this difficult time.



Photo of a murmuration of starlings by James Wainscoat for Unsplash.

See more about the Vesak celebration in Canberra and the full speech at: <https://unvesakaustralia.org/>

For thousands of years people have wondered how it is that every day in certain parts of the world tens of thousands of starlings can gather in the sky and dance and create beautiful shapes without bumping into each other. People have theorised that they had telepathic communication but 20 years ago Italian scientists used multiple cameras to photograph the birds in flight and found out that each individual was only interacting with six or seven neighbours. They fly in the same direction as the seven neighbours that are closest to them, reacting from second to second, staying close, but not too close. The starlings have no plan, no leader and no telepathy. Each one and their seven neighbours responds to the seven neighbours beside them, each of those seven respond to another seven, going on into infinity. I am using this example to put forward a model of collective action through small scale interaction.

If we think about the historical Buddha, his first teaching at Sarnath was to five disciples - just six people. But each of those five kept interacting with another small group, who interacted with another group, and so on. The Buddha himself kept interacting with other groups who interacted with other groups. They had no television, internet, radio or even texts in the very beginning, they just had personal contact, but from this base the collective murmuration of the Dharma has taken shape over the past two and a half thousand years.

So we are in a world where there is great trouble, inequality, a climate crisis and even war in many places. How do we respond to that? I think the murmuration of starlings provides a model of collective action through small scale interaction. If we can build peace at a small scale in our own communities then that will have a flow on effect - peace is contagious.

So, how do we build peace? We need to see ourselves as peace builders. If we have a very clear intention to increase the peace in the world through building good relationships and communities then we will achieve that. I think a lot of the time people do not take the opportunity to build peace because they lack confidence and think the aspiration is too great. But remember the murmuration of the birds, we only need to be in contact with a few people at any one time. If we have a clear intention to work through conflict and manage our relationships ethically and transparently and be a good spiritual friend, then automatically we will be building peace in the world. Good actions have a flow on effect, a murmuration.

Your Temple Can Apply to Join the Buddhist Council of Victoria

If your Buddhist temple would like to join the BCV then find out more about membership at <https://bcv.org.au/membership/>

By participating in the BCV you will have a say in what BCV focuses on in serving the Buddhist community. If your membership has lapsed please renew for \$70 p.a.