

## Ethical guidelines for The Melbourne Buddhist Centre April 2018

1. I undertake to abstain from harming living beings. With deeds of loving-kindness I purify my body.

The Melbourne Buddhist Centre aims to support the awakening of the individual, in a manner appropriate to each person. In all our dealings with one another we aspire to behave in a spirit of kindness, expressing *kalyanamitrata*, or spiritual friendship.

Our spiritual community has been defined by Sangharakshita as a 'free association of individuals'. Respecting this, it is important that individuals in positions of trust and authority do not misuse their position or authority for their own benefit or to influence others inappropriately.

We wish to minimise the harm we do, to any living being and to the natural world that sustains us. We affirm that physical violence, bullying and strong displays of anger have no place among us; and that we will serve vegetarian or vegan food only at Triratna Centres and events.

2. I undertake to abstain from taking the not given. With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.

We aspire to offer the Buddha's teachings in the spirit of generosity, making them accessible to all, regardless of financial circumstances.

The Melbourne Buddhist Centre depends on generosity. Donations help to pay our Centre's rents and mortgages and support those who teach, administer and manage. Many people give their time and energy to clean, teach, help with classes or retreats, organise and participate in the life of our Community and Order.

In turn we aspire to express generosity ourselves. We will do this by caring for our Centres and those who work and practise in them, and finding ways to support those who have taken on particular responsibilities in teaching, leading, administration or serving on the management committee.

Those who handle money or property for the Melbourne Buddhist Centre will administer and use the sangha's financial resources with great care, in consultation with others as appropriate, and do all that we can to avoid their deliberate misuse or misappropriation. Where misuse is deemed to have occurred, we will investigate and take action promptly.

The Melbourne Buddhist Centre is also part of its broader community, and dependent on the natural world. We will express generosity through our engagement in altruistic activity locally and nationally; and find ways of not taking the not-given in relation to the environment.

3. I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct. With stillness, simplicity and contentment I purify my body.

Triratna is a community of people practising the Buddha's teachings together. As such it is natural that close relationships should develop between us, and that some of these may be sexual relationships.

We encourage people to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness, whether with people of the same or opposite sex.

People in teaching roles, or otherwise helping to lead Centre activities, have a particular responsibility for *kalyanamitrata* (spiritual friendship). We will support the people we teach in their engagement with the Dharma, in an atmosphere of stillness, simplicity and contentment.

Partnerships have developed between many members of our sangha. These include sexual relationships between members of the Order and people for whom they were formerly teachers. Whilst we recognise that such relationships can be healthy and beneficial, we also know from experience that this is a matter requiring careful consideration. With this in mind, we believe it is best:

- a) If a person teaching the Dharma does not become involved in a sexual relationship with anyone (be they newcomers or more experienced Buddhists) for whom s/he is that person's main point of contact with the Dharma.
- b) If an interest in a sexual relationship does develop over time between someone teaching and a person they have taught, they will not pursue the relationship until the less experienced person has established effective friendships with other Order members.

Strength of feeling for the Dharma can easily be confused with feelings for us as Dharma teachers. Once we are no longer a person's main teacher we will leave a gap of several months before considering a sexual relationship with them.

When considering a sexual relationship with someone we have taught, we will consult with our chapters, kalyana mitras and preceptors, as applicable.\*

4. I undertake to abstain from false speech. With truthful communication, I purify my speech.

At ordination, members of the Triratna Buddhist Order undertake ten training precepts, of which four concern ethical communication. These ten precepts are found in very early scriptures and thus it is obvious that the Buddha considered communication a particular area of practice and care.

In all our dealings with one another, and with those we teach, we are committed to truthful, meaningful and harmonious speech which encourages spiritual growth and creates community, though we recognise that this may be expressed differently across the many cultures in our worldwide movement.

Through our communication we wish to create in our Centres an atmosphere of friendliness, co-operation and trust, enabling learning and exploration, through working harmoniously with others.

Much is confided in mitras and Order members as teachers and spiritual friends. We will share information carefully, motivated by desire for the wellbeing and spiritual progress of those we discuss.

5. I undertake to abstain from intoxication. With mindfulness clear and radiant I purify my mind.

The Melbourne Buddhist Centre aims to provide support for the development of wisdom and compassion through deepening awareness. We also wish to support those attempting to live without intoxicants.

We will engage with our practice and with each other with as much mindfulness as possible. We will not serve alcohol, drugs or other intoxicants at The Melbourne Buddhist Centre or events.

\*Refer also to related policy documents:

- [Practising with Children and Young People 2017](#)
- [Managing Disclosures & Allegations of Sexual Harassment & Abuse 2017](#)