



# The Buddhist Society of Western Australia (Inc.)

[www.bswa.org](http://www.bswa.org)

Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre  
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ABN: 40 352 930 645

Ms. Julie Abramson  
Commissioner,  
Productivity Commission

23rd February 2024.

Dear Ms. Abramson,

I am responding to your request for Feedback on DGR transition arrangements as they may affect the Buddhist Society of Western Australia and other Buddhist organisations (within the Australian Sangha Association) that presently have School building funds with DGR status.

Firstly BSWA wants to acknowledge the considerable benefit of having DGR status for almost 40 years and say a big Thank you.

If the sentiment of School building funds, coupled with DGR, was the creation of teaching facilities in remote areas of Australia – then BSWA has been a major beneficiary.

If the original sentiment of the funds, coupled with DGR, was for poor and financially challenged teaching organisations to acquire, construct and maintain those facilities (hopefully in perpetuity) the BSWA has benefited from the benevolence of Government and the general public in growing from literally nothing to its present infrastructure and reach across Western Australia.

No new site facility in our history commenced until there was demonstrable and sustainable Community support – for the longevity of the facility. Only on limited occasions were loans taken up as the Society has always preferred to be debt free and retain a decent buffer of funds to tide the Society over for a number of years if difficult times prevailed.

It is fair to say that the ability to have School Building funds has been an important aspect of our growth and sustainability despite the additional administrative burden. Uncoupling of the bank accounts associated with the separate Building funds (as determined by the ATO) would be a difficult operational task.

**Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery**

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**Dhammasara Nuns Monastery**

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**Jhana Grove Meditation Retreat Centre**

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At the public inquiry in Perth on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February BSWA were asked to provide a brief explanation of what support BSWA might require if School Building funds and DGR were withdrawn or revoked:

- BSWA would study the final report and make representations to the Federal Parliament if it felt, under law, it was being unfairly discriminated against.
- BSWA would want to understand the reasons as to why the DGR framework was being reformed (and not dismantled) as to why BSWA and others were to be denied DGR. BSWA would keep an open mind on the Productivity Commission proposal and abide by good judgement. There may be compensating features in the new Philanthropy framework that might negate losses from the revocation of DGR status.
- Alternatively, it may become the case that the ATO's Decision impact statement on the BSWA vs CoT be canvassed wider – in the public interest. Given the ATO chose to make pejorative statements about our Religion, meditation methods, and moral conduct BSWA would want to test as to whether the ATO were ever going to undertake the revisions promised in the Decision Impact statement, or were applying a further punitive enforcement on BSWA.
- In its representations to Federal Parliament BSWA would wish to question the quantum of the “saving” from removing school building funds set against Multinational and Australian Companies avoiding tax ( The Commissioner's address at the Canberra Press club on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024); The ‘saving’ element expressed as a % against the Government's overall expenditure in the Charity sector; and the value to the Community of the “saving” when viewed against major Government expenditure should as AUKUS (\$382 billion).
- We intend to remain law abiding citizens of Australia and wish to support our Australian and multicultural communities well. To that extent the BSWA Committee needs to be advised at its meeting on Sunday to prepare for the loss of the School Building funds and DGR.
- The fine print on any announcement of the windup provisions announced by any Government would need to be looked at very carefully. When revoking a DGR the ATO presently advises that the funds must be moved to another organisation's DGR fund. This will be doubly insulting if we are asked to move the outstanding balances to a non-Buddhist DGR fund. Public dismay from the donors will likely be prevalent given that their wishes have been overruled by the Government.
- BSWA says that the ATO's TR2013/2 policy is in tatters after Judge McKerracher's judgement (November 2021) and has been allowed to continue without revision.
- One possible solution as a last resort for the winding up provisions of the existing balances of School funds with DGR would be for them to be grandfathered (with no additions to the funds allowed) until they are extinguished and acquitted properly under policy and law, or a period of 5 years – whichever is met first.

- Lastly, knowing that we are a small feature of Australian Society, BSWA will now try to model the financial decline and shortfalls from the loss of DGR and revise any current Organisational Strategies accordingly.

yours sincerely,

Venerable Mettaji



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23rd February 2024.

Dear Ms. Abramson,

I am responding to your request for detail on diverse charitable initiatives undertaken by the Buddhist Society of Western Australia, all of which are provided to the community FREE OF CHARGE. Our commitment to inclusivity and support extends to individuals from all walks of life, irrespective of their religious affiliations.

- Introduction to Meditation Classes - We offer regular meditation classes that are open to everyone. We believe in making the benefits of meditation accessible to all, fostering mental well-being and mindfulness within the community.
- Ongoing Guided Meditation Sessions - This is offered to meditators who want to further train their mind to resist Greed, Hatred and Delusion.
- Monastics live simply in very small huts in the forest so as not to be a burden on a community, but also as an example for supporters.
- Give multiple teachings each week from the Suttas – with explanations on Moral conduct and resolving suffering.
- Counselling on demand which can be related to mental health; relationships, job loss; health issues. Any issue can present itself when a visitor or caller approaches us.
- Requested visits to Prisons, Hospitals and Hospices. We have been teaching in Prisons for more than 30 years. If a Buddhist practitioner in hospital or at home is dying there may be multiple visits to comfort the individual and their family.
- Funerals and Wedding blessings - In times of grief we extend a helping hand to families through compassionate funeral services. We are often invited as well to provide joyous wedding blessings to the broader community.

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- Special ceremonies on moral conduct and behaviour take place daily in the Monasteries and other facilities and also – on invitation in a person's home.
- Accepting appropriate invitations to offer Meditation retreats and talks on Buddhist conduct in many venues across Australia, but also worldwide. Ajahn Brahm can normally only accept 1 in 5 of the invitations requesting his services. These can be delegated to other Monastics if the invitee is considered noteworthy and our visit would be deemed beneficial.
- The original teachings were in the Pali language and we are regularly asked to enhance translations into English and other languages.
- We have offered help and advice to set up important standalone Monasteries and Buddhist organisations in the UK, USA, Poland, Norway and other Countries.
- Monastery grounds and our City Buddhist Centre are open for long hours so visitors can enjoy a peaceful visit on their own or Meditate in a main hall - most hours of the day.
- Meditation Retreats - We have built Meditation Retreat centres so people from anywhere in the world can step out of their busy daily routines and into a slower pace of life, enabling one to embrace the opportunity to recharge, relax and reflect. This extended period of seclusion also encourages one to deepen one's meditation practice.
- Special invited presentations on particular subjects such as Illness, Death and Dying (Solaris Cancer Care has hosted this initiative for 30 years).

In essence, the Society is dedicated to serving the community with a range of charitable activities, all of which are offered without any cost. Those who have benefitted from these services tend to make a donation as they understand that their support plays a vital role in sustaining our organisation and ensuring the continuation of these valuable initiatives.

BSWA has made inquiries in the past as to whether it could apply to be a Public Benevolent Institution but it was implied that our application would be unsuccessful.

Thank you for the hard work of the Commission.

yours sincerely,

Venerable Mettaji