



MEDIA RELEASE
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Sydney's Rainbow Buddhists Unite to Support Queer and Trans* Communities.

Rainbodhi is a new group for LGBTQIA+ Buddhists based in Sydney, Australia.

The name Rainbodhi combines two words; "rainbow" representing the diverse spectrum of the LGBTQIA+ community, and "bodhi" the Buddhist concept of Enlightenment.

In November, Rainbodhi's inaugural event will bring Sydney's diverse queer and trans* Buddhist community together for the very first time, to develop spiritual friendships and share their experiences of being LGBTQIA+ Buddhists.

Speaking about the need for a Buddhist queer and trans* group, Buddhist monk and founder of Rainbodhi, Bhante Akālika Bhikkhu said:

One of the reasons for starting Rainbodhi is the negative impact of the so-called 'religious freedoms' debate currently going on in Australian politics. After enduring the painful public discussion for the marriage equality postal survey in 2017, we are genuinely concerned about our community's well-being and loss of legal protections. A [recent survey](#) by the advocacy group *just.equal*, showed that 62.2% of LGBTQIA+ people feel vulnerable and 78.4% don't feel respected. We definitely don't want to see any discrimination against LGBTQIA+ human rights in the name of religion...

Spirituality is an intrinsic part of being human. It should be a source of connection and wisdom in our lives, rather than division and despair. Rainbodhi's message is that it's OK to be queer or gender diverse and also be a Buddhist. You don't have to choose between these two parts of yourself.

We want our Rainbodhi community to know that they are welcomed, accepted and loved for who they are. Everyone deserves love and compassion; these are fundamental Buddhist values.

According to the [2016 census](#), Buddhism is the third largest religion in Australia and has grown enormously in the last few [decades](#). Buddhism's three distinct major traditions of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, represent an incredibly diverse cultural mix of people living in Australia who come from many backgrounds, including India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan.

INCLUSION. COMPASSION. WISDOM.



The spread of Buddhism to Australia has led to a wide interest in the broader community for meditation retreats and mindfulness programs. These are often popular with queer and trans* people, who are attracted to Buddhism's non-judgemental approach to sexuality and gender diversity.

Acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of Sydney Buddhists, Bhante Akālika stated:

We want to unite queer and trans* Buddhists from all different cultures and traditions, as well as people who are new to Buddhism and meditation, or who just have an interest in spirituality. We also welcome people from all different religions, cultural backgrounds and other identities.

Our aim is to create a safe and supportive environment for like-minded people to practice meditation, understand Buddhist teachings and develop spiritual friendships.

Regarding the concerns of the LGBTQIA+ community about the threat of increased discrimination and erosion of human rights due to the religious freedoms debate, Bhante Akālika said:

No religion should preach hate or harm others. We need to let people know that it's fine to be LGBTQIA+ and a spiritual person, a person of faith. There have always been queer and trans* people in religious life and it's important for us to acknowledge that publically, with pride. Other religions in Sydney already have queer and gender diverse groups in their communities, such as *Sydney Queer Muslims*, and *Dayenu*, the Jewish LGBT+ group, so this is an opportune moment for Buddhism to recognise and celebrate the diversity of our community, too.

Speaking about Rainbodhi's upcoming launch event, Bhante Akālika said:

It's an exciting occasion because our diverse queer and trans* Buddhist community can connect with each other and celebrate our spirituality together. There will be guided meditation, a panel discussion about spiritual self-care, and the announcement of a fundraiser for an international LGBTQIA rights group that we want to support. We're also planning fun, interactive workshops for attendees to help us shape Rainbodhi's future.

Rainbodhi's inaugural event will be held on:

Friday 29 November, 6:30pm—8:30pm
Erskineville Town Hall
104 Erskineville Rd, Erskineville, NSW

The venue is fully accessible and close to public transport.

Ends.



For Further Media Information:

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About Rainbodhi

[Rainbodhi](#) combines two words; "rainbow" representing our diverse community and "bodhi" the Buddhist concept of Enlightenment.

We offer meditation and Dhamma discussion in a safe, supportive environment. Come along to chill out with meditation, hear authentic Buddhist teachings, and develop spiritual friendships with like-minded people.

We are non-sectarian and welcome everyone regardless of race, gender, sexuality or faith.

Rainbodhi has an emerging [Facebook community](#).