



History of KYLBC by Venerable Rinchen

The Beginning

On the 5 March 2001, I flew back to Australia having been ordained for two whole days! I had no idea of what lay ahead of me or what I would do with my new life. I remember landing in Cairns and thinking, "Oh my Buddha, what have I done!" I could barely keep the robes together, the dye had leaked out all over my arms and I was a mess. I was living in a small two-bedroom unit in Trinity Beach, working as a massage therapist and no idea of how to live this new life.

Those first few months were very difficult, I felt very disoriented and alone. There were a couple of other centres in Cairns at the time but of different traditions. In June of that same year, my Abbot, His Eminence Chogye Trichen Rinpoche came to Australia and I went to Canberra to see him. At the suggestion of a friend, I asked him if he thought it would be a good idea to start a small practice group in Cairns. He was very excited and said he would meditate and come up with a name for the group. I went back to Cairns and said to Tara (one of my meditational Deities) "Okay, so find us a home!" Within 24 hours I was looking at what would be, the first home for the yet-to-be-named centre.

A week later I flew to Brisbane to attend teachings with His Eminence and was given a private audience with him. He did a special divination and gave the name Khacho Yulo Ling, which roughly translates as the pure land of Vajrayogini and Tara, (two of my main practices). I went back to Cairns and started packing and preparing to start a very new and different life.

Kewarra Beach

In August 2001 I moved into the beautiful A Frame house in Kewarra Beach, just opposite the ocean. It was the beginning of a challenging, but extremely rewarding adventure. I was a bit daunted at first as the rent was quite a bit more than my little unit in Trinity Beach, but I knew this was what I was meant to do and everything just flowed on from that. Those early days were amazing, practicing with the soothing sound of the ocean in the background.

People gradually started to come to the practices and it was decided to do some fundraising to bring up our teacher at the time, Lama Choedak to bless the space and give teachings. We held a Green Tara, Aussie Breakfast fundraiser on the beach and raised the airfare to bring Lama up to Cairns the following April. Lama gave a special Green Tara blessing to open the centre, over a 100 people attended. It was so crowded people were spilling out onto the lawn. What a wonderful night, we had made special Tibetan cookies, welcome rice and Chai and the place overflowed with blessings and goodwill.

By this time I was also involved with a volunteer palliative care organisation, then known as 'Cairns Hospice at Home Volunteers', we later changed the name to Maitreya Hospice Care. The organisation's main aim was to give in home respite to the carers of loved ones who had chosen to die at home. We worked as a not for profit group affiliated with Gordonvale Palliative Care. I took over as the volunteer co-ordinator shortly after moving to Kewarra Beach and the committee decided to relocate the office to the Buddhist Centre. This arrangement helped financially with the high rent and made it easier for me to run both organisations from under the same roof.

We spent two wonderful years at Kewarra, hosting many retreats, teachings and practices but as with all things, change happens, and towards the end of the second year we were given notice that the place was going to be sold. It sold fairly quickly and we were on the move, desperately looking for the right place to set up a centre.

Clifton Beach

We moved to a beautiful place in Clifton Beach, two acres, a swimming pool, tennis courts and room for a pony! No one used the pool or tennis courts but we agisted the paddock for a pony and he helped to pay the rent. The rent was huge and it was a big gamble to take, but it felt right. I found it a struggle at times trying to manage working and running the centre and the hospice. Thankfully, a small dedicated group was forming, helping to keep it all afloat. The place seemed to generate money, we got a job folding invoices with Cleanaway which brought in a lovely monthly income. We did it as a community project, everyone pitching in to help on a Sunday after meditation. I really loved it there, it was peaceful and quiet and very soothing to practice in, but, unfortunately, impermanent!

Omens of Change

I began having moving dreams like I had had before Kewarra Beach was sold and contacted the real estate to see if we could extend the lease from one year to two in the vain hope of staying there. In the meantime, I had also felt it was time to formalise the group and become incorporated. At the end of one of our Sunday practice sessions, I put it out to the group that I had taken the centre as far as it could go as an individual and that we now needed to take the next step and form a committee. Everyone agreed and we decided to meet the following Saturday to work out how to set it up. On the day of the meeting I arrived back from a funeral to a message on the answering machine that the owners of the property were wanting to relocate back here and we had one months notice!

The meeting now took on a whole new urgency. We needed to start the process for incorporation and find a new home. A small group of people formed, who would act as the interim committee to set up the centre. Together we would start the incorporation process and also look for a new residence! This group consisted of Robert Virginie as President, Nick Hulme as Vice President, Peter Wyatt as Treasurer, me as Secretary, Annie Clarke, Dirk Werner-Lutrop, and Mimi Boivin as committee members. Jamchen Buddhist Centre in Melbourne provided us with a copy of their incorporation documents and the work began.

Risky Business

Our search for a new home was quite daunting, the rents were high and not many were suitable for setting up a Gompa. A client of mine rang and told me of an old church that was for sale in the paper. I rang the real estate agent and went and had a look at it. It was amazing, run down but perfect. The agent said there was an offer going in on it, so if I was interested I would have to be quick. With no money and now idea how it could possibly manifest, I just let it go. A few weeks later our interim committee was attending a tax seminar for not for profit groups and at the end of it I mentioned the Church again. I said let's see if it's still for sale, with the idea that maybe we could rent it. Fifteen minutes later we were crawling all over the place with shouts of excitement and ideas of what we could do with the place. I should mention at this stage, the center's finances consisted of money for the teachings and money for the rent, in a box in the cupboard. This became affectionately known as "the sock." How we ever thought we could buy this place still astounds me! We got a call later that day from the agent, to inform us that there was an offer going in on the property the next day, and if we were serious about buying it, we should come up with an offer and bring it to the table in the morning.

We called a meeting that night of interested people and it was decided that we would offer \$365 (we had been told that the owner was looking for around 350,000 to \$380,000 neg). The next morning we stopped for another quick look at the church and I said, "We shouldn't lose out for lack of generosity, we don't have any money, but I think we should offer another \$5,000, this might be just enough for the owner to take a chance with us." I was met with looks of absolute horror from the group, they thought I had gone mad, but trusted my instincts and agreed.

Our New Home

With the offer made at \$370,000, Robert and I walked out of the real estate office and straight into the Office of Fair Trading to lodge our very complex incorporation document. One of the conditions on our contract on the property, was that we buy it in the centre's name, for this to happen we needed to be incorporated. We put in an urgent request for a speedy approval so that Khacho Yulo Ling Buddhist Centre could buy a church!

We then had a very anxious overnight wait while the owner deliberated over which offer to take. Luckily for us that extra \$5,000 was enough to persuade him to give us a chance, now we just had to find the money! This proved quite a challenge. The 'sock' in the cupboard was duly consulted and with bond money and odds and ends we had roughly \$9,000. Which, believe it or not, inspired us to think we could raise the rest of it! A friend offered to go guarantor for a loan, so we approached every bank we could think of. We sent out to all and sundry for support, selling the windows to sponsors and trying to raise as much as we could. It was a very challenging and depressing process, most financial institutions wouldn't even consider us, let alone return our calls.

Time was running out, we had managed to raise \$43,000, but we couldn't find a bank or institution to finance us, we were too much of a risk! I then approached a friend, Lorna Kelly who had offered help when we were first homeless, and with some coaxing, pleading and begging from her to her husband, Paul, he finally agreed to finance the loan privately

through their solicitor. We would never have been able to buy this place without their financial backing and for this we are forever grateful.

We refinanced in mid 2009 with Bendigo Bank and have since paid off over \$100,000. In the beginning though, it was a month by month ordeal to see if we could meet our expenses. We had faith that if we provided a home for the Dharma, the Dharma would provide the means for us, and to this day it has. We are still here and still going strong.

The generosity and inspiration of everyone involved was amazing. In the space of two months we became incorporated, got stamp duty exemption (this saved us nearly \$13,000), raised \$43,000, bought a property, became incorporated, applied for and got Income tax exempt charity endorsement from the ATO and moved to our new home.

We got the keys to the property on 23 September 2004, moved in the following weekend and held meditation the next day. To celebrate we had an open day in October so people could come and have a look. We provided a lovely afternoon tea and got the first groups organised for working bees and fundraising. The official opening took place on 30 April, 2005 with over 100 people in attendance.

Blessings and Consecration

My heartfelt prayer for KYLBC was to have it blessed by its two Holy patrons, His Eminence Chogye Trinchen Rinpoche and His Holiness Sakya Trizin. The first of my prayers were answered in September 2006 when His Eminence and his entourage came to Cairns to consecrate the centre. They arrived quite late at night but this didn't daunt the enthusiastic and devoted welcoming party, they were greeted with a long line of people holding white khata (scarfs) and chanting.

From the airport it was a mad dash back to the temple for the traditional welcome ceremony. His Eminence gave us all with an impromptu Green Tara blessing which sealed an amazing evening. The following night, His Eminence was giving a public empowerment, Amitayus - a long life deity. We had booked the Civic theatre in the hope that we would have a large audience. We were totally blown away from the community response, over 600 people turned out to see this hidden yogi. My feeling was that he knew he would soon depart this world, and he was drawing in anyone he had a connection with, for a final blessing. Our center was the last center he blessed before he left Australia, and shortly thereafter, left this world. In January 2007 HE Chogye Trichen Rinpoche passed into parinirvana, he was one of the last great masters trained in Tibet and teacher to many great teachers alive today, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Cairns was truly blessed to have hosted such a holy visit.

Since then we have had the good fortune to host many great teachers, including, His Eminence Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, eldest son of His Holiness Sakya Trizin and His Holiness sister, Her Eminence Jetsun Kushok Chime Luding as well as Acharya Khenpo Jamyang Lekshe who was, until recently, the Director of the Sakya Centre, in Rajpur.

The second part of my wish was fulfilled when our other patron, His Holiness Sakya Trizin, head of the Sakya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, also came to Cairns in June 2009. Many weeks were spent in preparation for this most auspicious visit. His Holiness visit also coincided with the arrival of our new shrine from Nepal. The shrine was sponsored by two families on behalf of their deceased loved ones and it was to be consecrated by His Holiness. In the meantime we had to renovate the upstairs bathroom, turn the Gomba around to accommodate the new shrine and create a more traditional entrance, it was mayhem. We had to cut out the doorway to get the shrine into the Gomba and we had to reinforce the floor to hold the weight! There were statues to fill, food to prepare, gardens

and pathways to create and very little time. We were literally painting and cooking right up till it was time to go to the airport.

Although it was only a short visit, we managed to pack a lot into it. We gave His Holiness and his entourage a traditional welcome ceremony with chai and welcome rice on arrival. That night the committee were given the great privilege of having dinner with His Holiness to discuss the center's activities. The following morning His Holiness consecrated the new shrine and statues, we had around 100 people in attendance. He gave a special blessing for both the deceased, and the families who had sponsored the shrine. After lunch we took His Holiness and entourage on a speedy tour to Port Douglas and back. We stopped at Thala Lodge on the way home for afternoon tea where His Holiness entertained us all with several hilarious stories. That evening He gave the 21 Tara Empowerment to a packed out Gompa! His Holiness has promised to come back again and give a major empowerment and, as he said; "Also to see the great barrier reef!"

The visit of His Holiness was a special time for me for another reason. My father Don, his wife Christine and my son Aaron, travelled from Brisbane and the Gold Coast for this special event. Aaron, who is a camera man, offered to film the visit. He did a fantastic job and managed to capture a great exchange between my dad and His Holiness. My dad died suddenly the following May, I was so happy to know that he had received blessings from His Holiness before he left this world.

Blessings of the Buddha's and Arhats

Another of our historic moments was being able to host the precious relics of the Buddha, his disciples and many other great Masters, in March 2012. The weekend started off with an interfaith opening ceremony, attended by over 200 people celebrating peace and goodwill in all faiths and traditions. Over 1500 people came through the temple during the weekend, they came with their pets and children, young and old, lining up to see the relics and receive the blessings. We raised over \$5,000 for the Maitreya Project which is under the guidance of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

We have a chanting practice that is dedicated to the 16 Arhats of the Buddha, and it is said that the Arhat's have promised if you call their name, they will come. Well, we chanted and they came, or at least their relics did!

The Future

In the last few years our centre has changed direction slightly, we have now opened up to allow teachers from different traditions to teach here which has created a lovely feeling of harmony within the community allowing the Dharma to flourish in all it's myriad forms.

Ten years on and we are still flourishing amidst the hustle and bustle of Cairns. Our job now is to keep the blessings alive and flowing into the community. We can do this by coming to practice, supporting the committee, sustaining the energy, devotion, inspiration, enthusiasm and mindfulness but most importantly of all, maintaining our commitment to flourish the precious teachings of The Buddha.

We did it!!

During the month of Vesak in 2022 and with the support of our amazing community we were able to make our final mortgage payment on the Centre. Thank you to all of those who for many, many years have supported KYLBC with regular mortgage payments, we couldn't have done this without you! A huge debt of gratitude to all of you who through, devoted time, love and energy have made this happen, we are so grateful.

May the merit of everyone's effort in creating, maintaining and supporting Khacho Yulo Ling Buddhist Centre be dedicated to the flourishing of the precious Buddha Dharma for the benefit of countless sentient beings now and in the future.