





What is the Enlightenment Tree Project?

In the Buddhist world, there are just two major pilgrimage sites with individual large stupas coupled with a tree grown from the original tree under which the Buddha is believed to have attained Enlightenment 2500 years ago.

Bendigo already has The Great Stupa and we now have our own sapling certified as coming from that original tree.

The Enlightenment Tree Project is aiming to add Bendigo as the third pilgrimage site with a stupa and Bodhi tree. Such a combination on a scale like this is unlikely to be matched by another city in the world.



The Enlightenment Tree Project at the Great Stupa

To house the Enlightenment Tree, the Sri Lankan community in Bendigo is building a temple within the grounds of the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion.

The precious sapling was officially granted by the custodians of the Sri Maha Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka, and now —here in Bendigo— we are just one of three places that have the combination of a major stupa and a certified Bodhi tree.

We are seeking support to help us build a beautiful enclosure to protect and honour the significance of the Bodhi Tree as it grows to become a superb attraction that encourages wellbeing and joy for those who see it.

We are the Bodhi Dhamma Buddhist Association





Our Role in the Enlightenment Tree project

- Bodhi Dhamma Vihara is physically located within the grounds of the Great Stupa.
- Sri Lankan residents in Bendigo wanted to follow a traditional custom of offering lunch to Buddhist monastics but there is no Sri Lankan temple in Bendigo. We connected with the Tibetan monks and nuns affiliated with the Great Stupa and were able to make those traditional offerings to them. Over the years, our relationship with the Great Stupa has grown and strengthened.
- Ian Green, the CEO, offered our Sri Lankan community a parcel of land in the Peace Park within the grounds of the Stupa. We see it as an important symbol representing the coming together of diverse Buddhist traditions with shared objectives.
- At our instigation and management, the Enlightenment Tree project has developed from there and will become a wonderful focal point, not just for our local community, but as a solemn attraction for Australia and the world.

The Association has been active for over 12 years

- We began to operate in 2008 and have more than 120 members in the Bendigo area.
- Bodhi Dhamma Buddhist Association (Bendigo) Inc was incorporated in 2020 and is governed by its registered constitution.
- We are a not-for-profit organization representing Sri Lankan residents in Bendigo and Victoria.
- Our programs cover
 - public Food Festivals,
 - Annual Get-togethers/fetes,
 - Religious Events,
 - Cultural Dancing classes, and
 - Language classes



Get together





Dancing classes





Religious events



Language classes



Sri Lankan Food Night

with Live Music

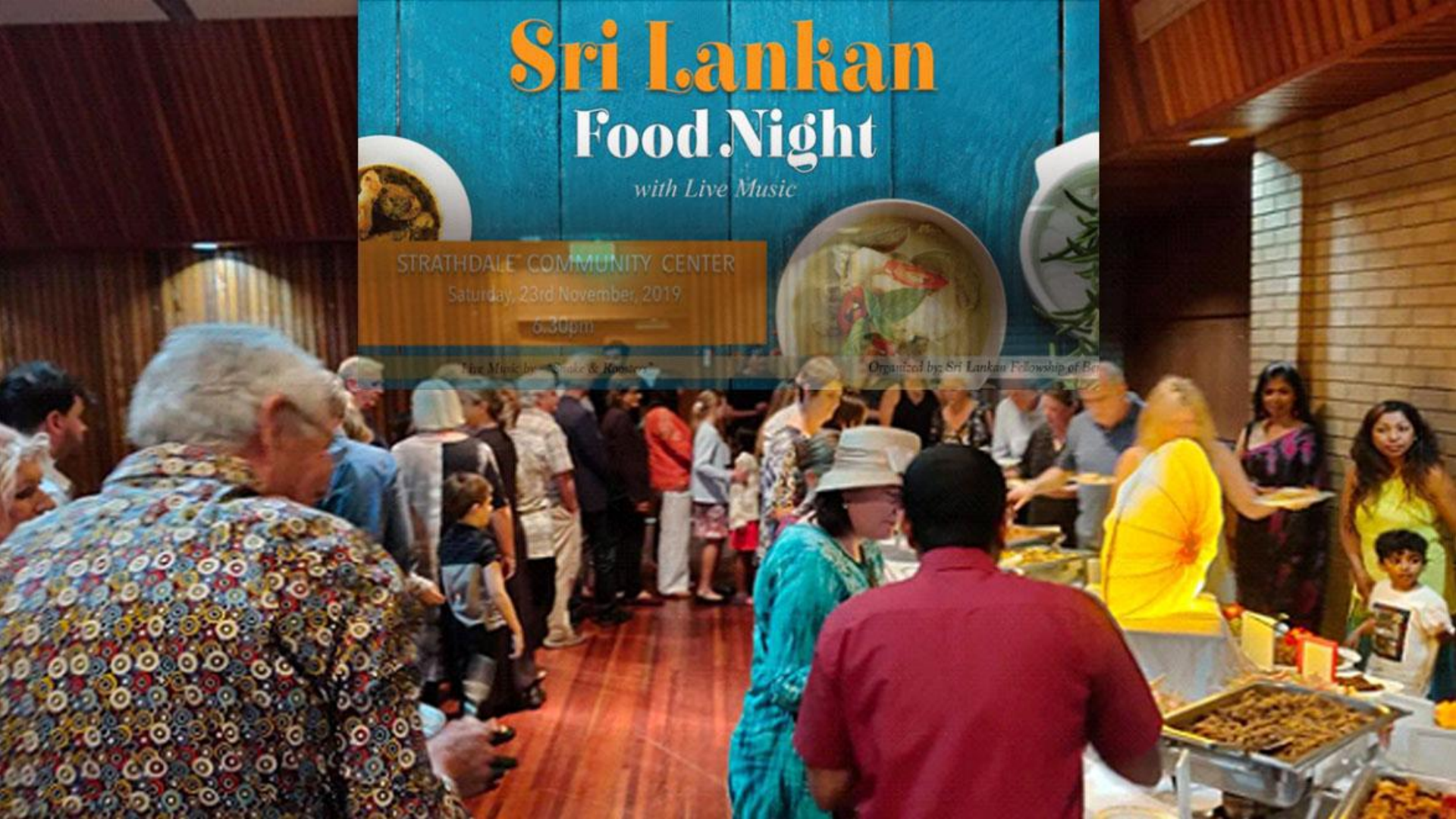
STRATHDALE COMMUNITY CENTER

Saturday, 23rd November, 2019

6.30pm

The Music by "Snake & Rooster"

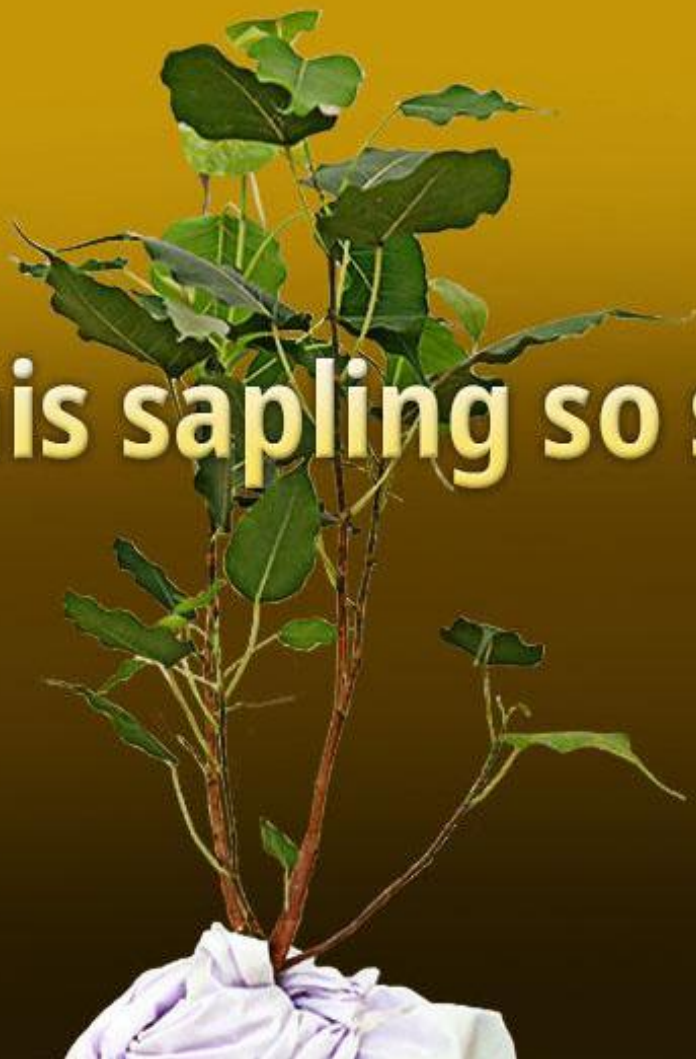
Organized by Sri Lankan Fellowship of B...



Sri Lankan culture expands the vibrancy of Bendigo life

- Bendigo is the welcoming home to many ethnic groups whose cultural traditions and customs enrich and magnify the life of the district.
- Older Sri Lankan generations cling to the older ways but our children are Australian and that means finding a meaningful marriage that doesn't dismiss either view but brings them together.
- We see our connection with the Stupa on this Project as a chance for us to bring our Sri Lankan connections to Bendigo in a way that honours our culture and also brings great benefit to our new home and Australian children.
- By advancing this new Project, we will develop a bridge within our families and also with the wider community around us.
- A new culture embracing an ancient culture, and with no division.

Why is this sapling so special?





In 2019, the Sacred Sapling came to Bendigo after elaborate pageantry and ceremony in Sri Lanka, formally witnessed by the First Secretary from the Australian Consulate.





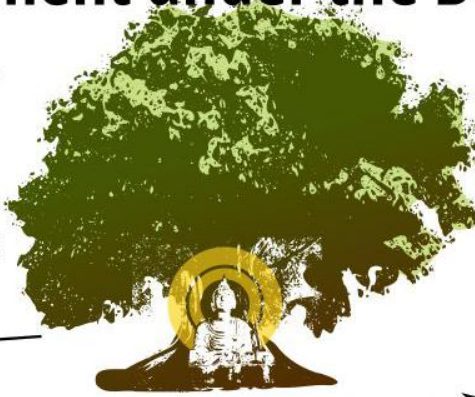
...making it a **Bodhi tree** for all **Buddhists**

for many centuries Buddhist pilgrims, and non-Buddhist too, have travelled through great hardships to visit both the original site of the Buddha's Enlightenment in Bodh Gaya and the Bodhi Tree in Anuradhapura.

500 BC — Buddha's Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree

3rd century BC, a cutting from that original tree was taken to Sri Lanka by Sangamitta Theri, daughter of Emperor Asoka.

In 288 BC it was planted by King Devanampiya Tissa in Anuradhapura and is documented as the oldest living tree known to be planted by humans. It is believed to be first generation grown from the original tree.



The original tree was attacked by kings and queens for centuries but somehow it grew back. Until 1876.



1

2

2

In 1876 the decaying tree was destroyed in a storm. In 1881, Alexander Cunningham planted a new cutting from the Anuradapura tree on the site of original. This second generation tree is the one now growing at Bodhgaya.



3

In 2019 the authorities in Anuradhapura gifted a sapling for planting at the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion in Bendigo Australia. It is a fully documented second generation sapling like the one in Bodhgaya.



There are thought to be many 3rd generation, unauthorised cuttings taken from Bodhgaya that are now growing in many anonymous locations around the world. The power of the Buddha means that peace, love and compassion has spread well beyond the boundaries of India.





The following images represent the current plans for the Enlightenment Tree enclosure at the Great Stupa







BODHI DHAMMA VIHARAYA TEMPLE






Why this Enlightenment Tree Project is so significant to Bendigo

- The existing Enlightenment Trees have attracted pilgrims to India and Sri Lanka for centuries.
- Pilgrims will also visit Bendigo from across the globe, and due to increased safety and ease of travel, the majority will come from Australia and New Zealand.
- According to ABS statistics, there are approximately 675,000 Buddhists living in Australia. Among them, greater Melbourne alone is home to more than 120,000 Sri Lankan descendent Buddhists. Our aim is to target these people and attract them to Bendigo.

The Enlightenment Tree project will increase tourism and add status and value to the Bendigo region

- The Enlightenment Tree project is situated within the Peace Park area of the Great Stupa which already attracts visitors to Bendigo.
- Expansion of activity will be easily covered. Stupa management currently serves considerable bus and car traffic, has disability access, caters to retirees, and caters to visitors from non-English backgrounds.
- At present there are 100,000 annual visitors to the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion. Many more visitors will come just to see the Bodhi tree.
- Once the Enlightenment Tree is established, there will be a significant number of tourists attracted from all the Buddhist communities in Victoria, other States etc.



The following slides show pilgrim activity in India and Sri Lanka



Crowds in Bodh Gaya, India







The Sacred Bo Tree in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, is the world's oldest living human-planted tree with a known planting date.

Both the Bendigo tree and the current Bodh Gaya tree grow from this exact same tree.

We should expect the Bendigo tree to eventually grow to this size.

Bendigo is now one of just 3 unique Buddhist Pilgrimage sites



As you have seen, the Bodhi trees at Bodh Gaya and Anuradhapura have been endowed with magnificent surroundings of buildings, enclosures and elaborate meeting areas that befit their significance to the followers of the Buddha all around the world.

This did not happen all at once. None of them began as a completed complex. This expansion has taken hundreds of years and only with the generosity of emperors, kings, and governments, and with the care and concern of generations of Buddhists and non-Buddhists from many continents.

Our concern with our modest new journey in Bendigo is that we must start with a clear eye on the future, a future that we will not live to see. In other words, the first iteration of the Vihara needs to be of suitable quality to inspire future generations to add to — not just leave as a finished piece that's good enough.