

The Criminal Code Amendment (Prohibition of Nazi Symbols) Bill 2023

1. The Buddhist Council of Western Australia (BCWA) represents member Buddhist temples in Western Australia of the three branches of Buddhism namely Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana.
2. Buddhism was founded by the Buddha Gotama who lived in India and has for about 2,500 years had a largely peaceful history.
3. As per historical records, Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) and the Chancellor and dictator of Germany from 1933 to 1945, himself termed the Nazi swastika symbol as "hakenkreuz," which is the German word for swastika meaning "hooked cross".
4. Due to the association of the hakenkreuz with racial Nazi ideology, many European nations have rightly banned the symbol for decades based on their direct experience of the death and destruction associated with Nazism starting from the era of World War II which is a part of recent Western history. The Nazi hakenkreuz is currently banned in over thirty countries including China¹.
5. The swastika in English or hakenkreuz in German, as a shape or symbol, has been found all over the world both in the West and in the East and the oldest example is believed to be 12,000 years old etched on mammoth ivory in modern day Ukraine².
6. The word swastika as it pronounced or sounds, comes from Sanskrit language. One of the oldest swastika symbols found in India is from the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished around 4,000 years ago. These swastikas are believed to have been a symbol of auspiciousness, fertility, and prosperity.
7. In Buddhism, the swastika shape or symbol is associated mostly with Mahayana Buddhism in China and surrounding regions.
8. In Chinese language, the swastika shaped symbol is commonly known as "卐" (pronounced as "wàn" or "wànzi" in Mandarin). The Chinese meaning and the Indian Sanskrit meaning is similar and predates Buddhism.
9. In Chinese Buddhism, the swastika symbol represents auspiciousness and good fortune. It is often used to represent the teachings of Buddhism and is associated with blessings, luck, and prosperity. It is commonly seen in Buddhist temples, statues, and artefacts such as on the feet or footprints of the Buddha.
10. The BCWA supports the wording of The Criminal Code Amendment (Prohibition of Nazi Symbols) Bill 2023 which exempts the use of the swastika symbol in Buddhism with the proposed clause which reads as follows: "(4) To avoid doubt, the display of a swastika in connection with Buddhism, Hinduism or Jainism does not constitute the display of a Nazi symbol."

Submitted on behalf of the BCWA Committee: Mon 10 April 2023

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bans_on_Nazi_symbols

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swastika>