

# School puts its faith in Buddhist

**Tanya Chilcott**  
SCHOOLS REPORTER

A BUDDHIST nun whose dream has always been to work with refugees is the state's first non-Christian school chaplain.

Venerable Lozang Thubten's employment is being described as a breakthrough by non-Christian groups, who say a lack of resources and a cumbersome bureaucratic process have thwarted their attempts to place school chaplains in the past.

Milpera State High School principal Adele Rice said a Buddhist chaplain was the perfect choice for the students, many of whom had just arrived from refugee camps following traumatic experiences.

In 2006, the school, at Chelmer in Brisbane's southwest, was involved with the Dalai Lama's visit to Australia, motivated by his teachings of compassion, tolerance and inner peace.

Ms Rice said these virtues were essential, with many of the school's students coming from mono-cultural, fundamentalist backgrounds where they had sometimes been taught not to mix with other races, religions or the opposite gender.

"They are not prepared for this



**HAPPY appointment ... Queensland's first non-Christian school chaplain, Venerable Lozang Thubten, gets to grips with her new role with Milpera State High School students Jackline Jackson, John Akech-Kuir, Marta Kere and Atem Deng.**  
Picture: Glenn Barnes

type of cross-cultural, multicultural type of environment," she said. "It (Buddhism) is all about maximising everybody's potential as human beings and their potential learning."

Venerable Thubten said Buddhism was perfect for Milpera, which had a lot of Christian and Muslim students.

"The Dalai Lama has always said

that one of the things we are not to do is to prosthetise," she said. "He has always said people should stick with the religion that they were brought up with if that is something they find meaning in or help in. So he is not out to convert anybody.

"What Buddhism can bring is some of the practical aspects of just living a

peaceful and happy life and developing compassion for everyone around you."

Traumatised students have already benefited from Venerable Thubten's presence, with relaxation classes she has run helping them sleep better.

Islamic Council of Queensland president Suliman Sabdia said he had

given up on trying to place Muslim chaplains in schools in the past because of the bureaucratic process.

Both Islamic and Buddhist councils of Queensland now hope to place more chaplains in state schools.

There are currently 503 chaplains in Queensland's state schools — 502 are Christian.