

Atisha Centre



ANNUAL REVIEW 2018

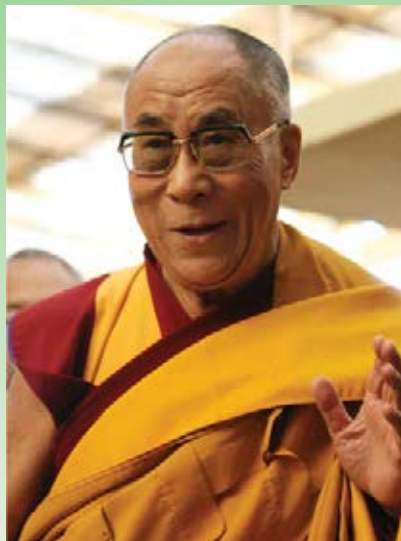
‘A Land for Completing the Human Potential’

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

“Bodhicitta is very practical, I tell you. It’s like medicine. The self-cherishing thought is like a nail or a sword in your heart; it always feels uncomfortable. With bodhicitta, from the moment you begin to open, you feeling peaceful and you get tremendous pleasure and energy. Forget about enlightenment; as soon as you need to open yourself to others, you gain tremendous pleasure and satisfaction. Working for others is very interesting: It’s an infinite activity. Your life becomes continuously rich and interesting.”

Lama Thubten Yeshe

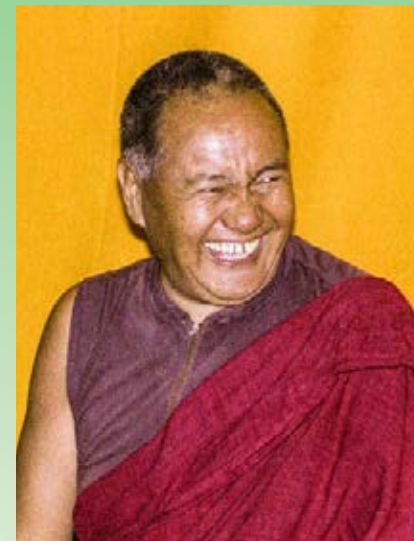




Our Spiritual Leader
His Holiness Dalai Lama



Our Spiritual Director
Kyabje Thubten Zopa Rinpoche



Our Inspiration and Founder
Lama Thubten Yeshe Rinpoche



Our Resident Teacher
Venerable Geshe Thubten Rabten



OUR PURPOSE WHAT WE PROVIDE

ATISHA CENTRE is dedicated to



- The transmission of Tibetan Buddhism through the promotion of study and dissemination of Buddhist teachings, emphasising the teachings of the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism;
- Atisha Centre's mission is to preserve the Mahayana Buddhist tradition by maintaining teaching and retreat facilities that support Mahayana practitioners in study, contemplation and meditation.
- We welcome people of all backgrounds and faiths to develop their natural wisdom and compassion through essential education and service.
- Maintaining at all times an affiliation with **FPMT Inc.**, a Californian non-profit, religious corporation representing an international group of organisations and individuals devoted to the transmission of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition and values worldwide through teaching, meditation and community service, and based upon the Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsong Khapa.



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear venerable sangha, members, friends and volunteers ,

Another year has flown by and at the heart of the Centre is our purpose to preserve the Mahayana teachings. With a growing community of committed students and a qualified teacher who is a constant source of inspiration, we feel very blessed. Our strategic plan was accepted in a membership meeting extending our vision to 2033. A very generous donation from Peter Korevaar allowed us to prepare the Centre for Rinpoche's retreat, including extending our bookshop and adding a café.

Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's retreat was a joyful occasion with students from around the world practising together in the beautiful Stupa of Universal Compassion. It has been an opportunity for Atisha Centre, the Great Stupa and the Monastery to work together with the Heart of Wisdom board and be part of this auspicious occasion.

Rinpoche visited Atisha Centre at the beginning of the retreat and met with Atisha Centre's board and management. We offered Rinpoche tea and treats from the "Wishfulfilling Jewel Café" and he visited the bookshop.

Rinpoche's advice was to have fun teaching the *lam rim* with Australian animals such as gheckos. Also, Rinpoche

gave advice on retreats in the future. Rinpoche's final advice was to

"Do everything with bodhicitta and wisdom".

We warmly welcome Venerables Tsapel and Rigsal as new residents to the Centre. It is a great joy to have them around. Alison Thomson has taken on the role of Volunteer Coordinator. We now have 35 regular volunteers at the Centre weekly.

Thank you for the monthly, financial support we receive to the Geshe Translator fund. Kathy Rice and Tim Allen have been teaching Genla English throughout the year. His English is improving.

Barbara Mclean has replaced the main flowers on the Tara statue in the gompa to make them more traditional. This request was made by Rinpoche. The statue of Lama Atisha is now consecrated and holds some of Atisha's ash relics.

Thank you to Peter Stickels our FPMT Coordinator who has been a continued mentor for me during the past year. During our FPMTA meeting a first aid course for vulnerable people dealing with complex issues was discussed.

Next year, we are intending to improve the Lama Yeshe Memorial Garden and hopefully produce a life-size statue of Lama Yeshe and to incorporate some teaching-interactive stations for kids and adults to learn about the *lam rim*.

Much appreciation to our Board and Management Group, who work hard to make the Centre function and provide such an amazing and precious service. I am incredibly grateful for their support and friendship.

Be well - Big love!

Ruby Karmay
CENTRE DIRECTOR



MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD - SECRETARY

*W*ow! What an amazing year since our last AGM. It never ceases to amaze me how the Centre continues to grow and develop year after year. The highlight has been the very generous teachings offered by our Spiritual Director, Kyabje Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, for six weeks from April to May this year.

Such events are an opportunity for the Centre to work closely together with the Great Stupa, and the Monastery, to share our facilities and resources in supporting such auspicious events. We look forward to working together in collaboration on future events.

Rinpoche's visit also brought about a hive of activity – before, during and after – in preparing the site, and bringing together many new



and old students, visitors and volunteers, to help support the Centre. Many projects that have been on the planning table for a while are being completed. This included the construction of the “Wishfulfilling

Jewel Café”, and much needed renovations to the Atisha shop. A great big thanks to Liam Chambers and his team who managed this with short notice, and a very generous member who offered the money to fund this.

The whole site looked absolutely amazing and would not have been possible without our exceptional volunteers, guided by our wonderful volunteer coordinator Alison Thomson. Thanks to all of you who generously offered your time and efforts during this time, and those of you who continue to do so.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to say a big thank you and farewell to two of our committee members, Dianne Gee, who has been a long standing member over many years, and Tom Castles, our outgoing Treasurer. I would also like to welcome our new Chairperson, Trevor Smith. As you are aware, boards of management are also made up of volunteers who dedicate their time and efforts to help support the running of the centre.

A heartfelt thanks to our dedicated Director Ruby, and SPC Andy, for their continued outstanding efforts in the day-to-day management of the Centre, and the Spiritual Programme.

Warmest Regards,

Nic Aunger
BOARD SECRETARY

MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD - CHAIR

It does not feel like a year since I started in this role. Time goes so fast when you are having fun and achieving goals.

Since adopting our new strategy the Board has been spending a lot of time working on the objectives in a clear and focused way. The strategy was highlighted by the masterplan for the precinct and has provided us with motivation to continue the plan delivery for the long term, while delivering our current services to a high standard. Our programme keeps growing, our Centre visitor numbers are growing and our newsletter "Chorten" keeps getting better.

The programme calendar is amazing, and very full, and yet still growing. I feel the team has exceeded expectations in delivery as the teaching centre for this Buddhist area within central Victoria.

The growth of Atisha Centre along with the other Buddhist groups in the area is sure to continue. The success of the Centre through recent retreats and events has shown that we are making a real difference.



To keep up with this growth and the demand for more services like retreats, training, tourism, and my favourite, the garden walks, we have been improving ourselves in the running of the Centre's operations. We have increased services and quality as well as the number of volunteers and

staff to run the services. The Board has been a great asset and has been responsible for delivering the direction to our operations team led by Ruby Karmay who has given us the tools we needed to do so as a board.

We have built up our visitor experience for the Centre through good management of our funds that mostly rely on very kind donations. The financials are managed to ensure visitors and members have the best experience possible. They are constantly under review for even more improvement.

The team that maintains and manages the Centre is fantastic. The gardens and the buildings are inspirational and as I said earlier, the programme of things to do should have every visitor leave, better for their visit. Our administration team has been patient with the Board's requests and has also given us the tools to work with as a board. I thank the various teams for the great effort and the benefit they provide for our visitors.

I also thank the teams for the satisfaction I get from this role. It is a pleasure to chair the Board of Atisha Centre. The challenges involved with our continued success are present, but at the same time motivating. Having completed many of this year's challenges along with the team, I can say that the motivation for accepting next year's challenges is very strong.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their effort this year. Thank you for helping me get started in the role and the continued improvement I believe we have made to the Centre.

Trevor Smith CHAIRPERSON

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME

"A mind committed to compassion is like an overflowing reservoir - a constant source of energy, determination, and kindness."

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

"There are many different ways of explaining, presenting, emptiness. Of course, somebody has a lot of merit from the past, has performed strong purification and has imprints from meditating on it in the past, they can receive incredible blessings because of great guru devotion and have everything click in their mind. When they read the teachings everything clicks, and one day their meditation works."

Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche



*A*tisha Centre's programme has grown this year thanks to the amazing support from the monks at Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery



and the volunteers and coordinators of the different events. There has been much effort in publicising the programme through the website, e-news bulletins, Facebook and the hand-dropping of fliers and posters to Bendigo and outlying towns. Thank you to everyone who was involved.

Our excellent teacher, Venerable Geshe Rabten continues to inspire students with his teachings and pure advice and we are

constantly reminded how fortunate we are to be under his guidance. Many thanks to Venerable Lobsang Dorje for his unfailing translations of Genla's words. Without Dorje's translations, we would not even start to understand the teachings.

Our regular programme is progressing much as last year. On Wednesday nights Genla is continuing to teach, in depth, on the *lam rim* text by Patrul Rinpoche, "Words of My Perfect Teacher". Genla's commentary presents in detail, meditation methods of understanding and realising the graduated path.

Study Group is held approximately twice a month and attracts a core group of students. New people join and are encouraged to attend and experience this particular style of Dharma delivery. Again, very

in-depth teachings. Genla is continuing with the very special text by Nagarjuna: "Letter to a Friend". This text could continue into next year after which Genla has offered to teach "Praise for Dependent Arising" by Lama Tsongkhapa.

We have increased the number of retreats offered at the Centre. Last September Geshe Rabten taught the "Eight Verses of Mind Training" by Langri Tangpa. This very successful course was led by Venerable Thubten Lhundrup. In November, Buddhist artist Andy Weber graced us again with a thangka painting course on "Cittamani Tara and the 21 Taras". Over 20 people attended this event. At Xmas, we held our regular Chenrezig retreat, very popularly led by Venerable Jampa Choepal.

This year, we were blessed to participate (both in organisation and attendance) in Lama Zopa Rinpoche's retreat at the Great Stupa. A highly auspicious and beneficial event which inspired everyone. This retreat occurred over Easter and so this year acted as our Easter course. Following Rinpoche's visit, we held a Vajrasattva retreat also led by Venerable Jampa Choepal. This was a packed retreat and hugely successful. In August we held a public talk and a three-day course with Venerable Robina Courtin. As usual - totally packed out and very well-enjoyed.

For the rest of this year, we have more retreat-courses planned - including two courses by Andy Weber: "Padmasambhava" and "Yamantaka". In September, Geshe Rabten will teach a five-day course on "The Three Principals of the Path" and at the end of November we will host a Vajrayogini retreat in the main gompa, with Chenrezig retreat again taking place at Xmas.



"Discovering Buddhism" is now up to Module 6 and has a steady group of attendees. Reports from the group are that DB is very enjoyable and extremely informative. Many thanks to course leader Venerable Thubten Lhundrup.

We have had regular "One Day Meditation" and "Intro to Buddhism" courses on Saturdays, led by Venerables Jampa and Tsapel. Many thanks! These one day events attract a lot of people.

Geshe Rabten is continuing with his monthly, Saturday "Afternoons with Gen-la" teachings. Genla presents the *lam rim* in one-off gems. These teachings are attended by both regulars and by those just wishing a taste of Dharma.

Our meditation programme is well-established with "Sunday Meditation" in the main gompa, led by different monks from TSL Monastery and by Venerables Tsapel and Rigsal from Atisha Centre. There is "Friday Morning Meditation", led by Carole Donne and we have "Tuesday Night Meditation" held in Bendigo and led by Venerable Jampa Choepal. Jampa has been extending the Tuesday nights with a further "Intro to Buddhism" course for beginners wishing to gain an overview.

This year we have added another regular event - "Healing Support Programme". This is a course of ten Wednesday morning meditations, discussions and support for people facing illnesses or life-threatening health problems, or dealing with others facing those. It has been developed and is led by Venerable Lozang Rigsal and is proving very popular and likely to become a permanent fixture in our calendar as it



One of the newly painted gompa lions.

Retreat participants



develops further. Thank you and well done Rigsal!

Once a month on a Sunday we have “Community Day”. Genla gives a morning teaching and this is followed by a community lunch. At the same time we have Dharma Club for children. Many thanks to Cilla Brady for all her hard work in this activity and a big hello and welcome



to Carolyn Jones who has taken over Dharma Club.

One special Community Day we celebrate the birthday of His Holiness Dalai Lama. This year we offered more extensive prayers including the 16 Arhat prayers, for His Holiness’ long life and this was followed by animal blessings and community lunch.

Our book and gifts shop, has continued to bloom under the management of Tim Allen. Thank you to all the hard work from Tim and to all his volunteers who help serve in the shop.

Thank you to our out-going Gompa Managers, Peter Lane and Venerable Rigsal, for all their work setting up and general care of the gompa.

The “Publications Project” continues to develop. Geshe Rabten’s teachings are being transcribed and edited. We are always looking for more volunteers to be involved with this project. As usual, ALL the teachings given by Geshela are available online as audio files, together

with supporting handouts.

Finally, many thanks to everyone who has helped with the Programme and to Michael Chambers for his continued IT troubleshooting, and special thanks also to Helen Sleswick, Helen Grundy, Sandra Robertson, Brian Ashen and Katy Ward for their catering of Programme events. Thanks also to Ingrid Sorum at Tara Institute for all her hard work publicising our events on FaceBook.

Please rejoice in all the good work done by everybody mentioned above, rejoice in the good work of anyone whose name I forgot to mention and forgive me for having forgotten.

Much love,

Andy Melnic

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME COORDINATOR



TUESDAY MEDITATION IN BENDIGO

The Tuesday meditation at St Paul's Cathedral is really going very well, with Venerable Jampa Choepal leading the meditations. He has also taught a series of classes on "Intro to Buddhism" for beginners in 2017 and this year, which followed the meditation session. These two series of classes were also well attended and provided a good grounding for newcomers and some of our regular participants, with opportunities for questions and answers after Venerable Jampa's talk.

Venerable Lundrup and Venerable Yeshe have also lead the meditations at different times during the year.

We usually have at least 25 people every week, which can swell up to 40 some weeks. There is a dedicated group of regular attendees which seems to be growing by word-of-mouth. The time of 5:45pm suits the participants.

The location and comfortable facility of St Paul's Anderson Room is a contributing factor. St Paul's has created and displayed a poster promoting its various groups including our Tuesday meditation group.

Also contributing to the group's success is Ben Dyett, who has opened, and organised the set-up and closing for each evening. He is grateful to the participants who help with the pack-up of cushions, chairs etc.. I helped with this role during the six weeks of teachings in 2017 and the ten weeks of teachings in 2018.

Cilla Brady

TUESDAY NIGHT MEDITATIONS COORDINATOR



CHILDREN'S DHARMA CLUB

Carolyn Jones is the new Coordinator of the Children's Dharma Club. Carolyn, who is a teacher during the week, is enjoying this new role. She sometimes invites friends in to contribute to the morning's programme, which is attended by 3 - 6 children and some of the parents each time. The children do craft projects, listen to stories and meditate for the hour or so on our monthly Community Days.

Carolyn thinks more advertising would grow this group in the future.

Cilla Brady

DHARMA CLUB COORDINATOR



ATISHA BOOK AND GIFT SHOP

What a wonderful year it has been for the Atisha Shop! Much hard work and dedication from all the shop volunteers and some key improvements resulted in an extremely successful year, which is an occasion for heartfelt rejoicing.

The big “Heart of Wisdom” retreat with Lama Zopa Rinpoche in April and May provided a deadline and rallying point to some major projects, designed to improve our service and operation:

- “The Wishfulfilling Jewel Café” was built and set up in front of the dining room. Thank you to the many people who worked so hard on this, and to Ruby Karmay for being such a dedicated manager during the retreat.
- The shop front was extended to make the floor space about 50% larger. Thank you to Liam Chambers and his assistants in getting this finished in time.
- A modern point-of-sale system was installed and set-up. This transformed the shop into a much more efficient and professional service and was a major factor in our success.

One of the main goals mentioned in last year’s report was to improve profitability, and the table below shows how successful this has been:

Financial Year	Gross Profit	Net Earnings
2016-2017	\$35,171.38	\$5,958.67
2017-2018	\$88,895.03	\$33,199.00

Although the core mission of the Atisha Shop is to subsidise the Centre’s retreat and teaching programs, its success should not just

be measured in financial terms. When I was once asked by Dharma students why I was working in the shop instead of attending a retreat session, I said, “You are doing your practice, and I am doing mine”. We are also a service that practises equanimity and compassion and aspires to help our customers in their practice and journey in the Dharma, and I am gratified that this has been recognised by others.

I am so thankful to the following shop volunteers who put so much time and effort into supporting the Atisha Shop (*alphabetical*): Dina Armbruster, Brian Ashen, Johanna Winchcomb, Kallila Banda, Cilla Brady, Vanessa Conroy, Margaret Davey, Ken Fox, Linley Kerlin, Andrew Miller, Shannen Peers, Cindy Puddick, Robyn Ralton, Lynne Saunders, Fiona Silver and Pauline Walden. My apologies in advance if I have forgotten anyone. In addition, I would like to thank Ruby Karmay and Andy Melnic for their guidance and advice, as well as the rest of the Atisha Centre staff for their support and friendship. Thank you also to the esteemed sangha at Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery, including our venerable resident teacher Geshe Thubten Rabten, for their wonderful example and leadership.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be the manager of the Atisha Shop during the last year. I rejoice in the merit that has been generated in our work, and dedicate it to the awakening and happiness of all sentient beings.



Tim Allen SHOP MANAGER

GOMPA

I arrived at Atisha Centre in February of this year and took over the role of Gomba Manager. Soon after my arrival Lama Zopa Rinpoche led a six week retreat at the Great Stupa. Atisha Centre's gomba was still used for various events during that time and was very busy toward the end of the retreat with the preparations for the long-life puja for Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Since then, the gomba has been used extensively for teachings and meditations. I am very grateful to all those who have helped me with setting up and clearing away for teachings and meditations. A healing group also takes place on a Wednesday morning and the people who attend this group willingly set up for the Wednesday night teachings before they go home. This is a great help and I thank them all.

A Vajrasattva retreat was recently held in the gomba led by Venerable Jampa and well-attended by 25 to 30 students.

The gomba has also been used for a 10 day yoga retreat. During this time the Monastery very kindly provided space for Guru Puja and "Discovering Buddhism" while "Friday Meditation" and "Healing Group" took place in the small gomba/library. Hopefully, the greater use of the gomba will continue, however, we also need to be aware of space needed for some of the regular activities of the Centre.

Recently the gomba was used for the filling and consecration of the statue of Lama Atisha. A great deal of preparation of the statue and the contents with which it would be filled happened beforehand. A well thought-out plan was devised for moving the statue before and after the filling took place. Then Saturday saw much activity in preparation for the consecration and blessing of the contents. Sunday was the culmination of all this activity and Venerables Kedrup and Konchog Rinchen chanted the prayers and led us through the filling of the statue. Many people were involved in different ways to make this occasion a great success. Thank you to everyone for their time, their talents and the harmony of working together so well.

The gomba was also used recently with a visit and teachings from Venerable Robina Courtin. This was a very well attended retreat with 45 people benefitting from Venerable Robina's delivery of the Buddha's teachings.

With love and prayers,

Lozang Rigsal
GOMPA MANAGER



Robina's end of retreat offering



The filling of the Lama Atisha statue



*White Tara statue offered
by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to
Machig Labron Nunnery*

LIBRARY

In mid March 2018 Alison and I inspected the library with the plan to have it ready for the Lama Zopa Rinpoche retreat.

I was absolutely amazed at the number of titles on the shelves! Prior to my involvement at Atisha Centre I had rarely seen more than five titles on Buddhism on public library shelves, and in front of me there were approximately 1000 titles.

I was very impressed with the work that had been completed by previous volunteers and after much consideration and discussions with librarians at the Great Stupa, Chenrezig Institute and Langri Tangpa Centre, I have decided to maintain the current subject grouping for shelving and display of book titles. To upgrade this I am planning to reprint professional spine labels and colour code each subject grouping. This will make the reshelving of titles and shelf-list checking a much simpler task.

Hand-in-hand with the process of reprinting spine labels we will catalogue each title on a web-based library system. "Library Thing" for cataloging and "Tiny Cat" to monitor borrowing.

These two systems were recommended by Miffy at Langri Tangpa. Eventually, borrowers will be able to access and search our collection via Atisha Centre's website.



I am hoping to train a small team of volunteers to assist with this cataloging process.

My only concern at this point is the security of the collection. In the centres I have visited and librarians I have spoken with, access to their libraries is only available during times of supervision. At the moment the library falls into the category of an "open access reading room".

In preparation for the LZR retreat I implemented a basic borrowing system and requested that borrowers complete a library membership form.

Of the 21 borrowers who have used the library, only six completed the membership form. Two are members of Atisha Centre and the remaining four were visitors.

To date, 73 items are officially recorded as borrowings.

From the perspective of a librarian, tracking and monitoring borrowings is almost an impossible task given the current housing situation. I look forward to meeting with Andy and Ruby to consider the housing options for the library in the future.

Regards,

Johanna Winchcomb
LIBRARIAN

FACEBOOK

In July last year I took over from Carla Lewinson maintaining the Atisha Centre FB page. Having four years of formal IT and web design experience I hoped to offer my time and skills.

Local FB Goals: To use the built-in analytic's function to gauge the interest of the various Dharma teachers, events, programmes and posts to form a stronger understanding of our online community.

To determine if we needed a broader reach, or specific interactive presence to assist in connecting potential students to our unique Dharma teachings and community.

Continue developing an interactive platform as a great way to direct traffic to Atisha Centre's website.

Activities: So far, my main focus has been answering the regular questions from the inbox, addressing the comments under the "Events" posts themselves and posting events and creating reminders – attracting those who are on the FB platform regularly. Also, building the Atisha Facebook Community page as a direct means of connecting via chat etc. This has not taken off quite yet as I have found most people use the comments section to share and connect with their friends.

Helpful Results: Throughout the past twelve months I have been monitoring this user information. As a result I was able to boost the attendance views and comments considerably. For example: Robina's talks and retreat info attracted over 3,000 hits and shares in a short space of time (an outstanding count so far.) Other events throughout the year saw over 1000 hits for individual posts as well. Slowly our FB page is gaining much interest.

Future: I would like to continue to develop project folders with photos and explanations of our special events as well. So anyone with great

photos are welcome to send them to me online with all credits due. We all love spending time looking at people and places of interest before we go there.

A desirable goal is to upload regular Atisha Channel YouTube videos from the general programme, offering a time slot with "questions for Geshe la" directly from the FB community. There has been a lot of interest in this so far. I look forward to seeing the questions online users present especially. This project quickly got 100 likes earlier on.

To facilitate this project for the many unable to attend, we need someone to volunteer to set up and film each week. Please spread the word. I hope to upload this onto our YouTube channel after it has been edited.

In closing: I recognise most active course participants use the internet and FB daily so it is quicker and more effective to promote our Centre via a strong and varied internet presence. FB is a highly interactive and speedy way to get our messages out. The growing statistics are validating this each month.

Thank you for this great opportunity to contribute to our FPMT mandala.

Ingrid Sorum
FACEBOOK MANAGER



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ATISHABUDDHISTCENTREBENDIGO

VOLUNTEERS

Atisha Centre is presently supported by approximately 35 volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator role includes processing volunteer applications and enquiries, interviews, filing forms and ongoing discussions with volunteers to ensure their continued participation at the Centre. The requisite volunteer forms have been reduced to a standard three page format with four optional attachments. Attachments include work schedule, contracts, position descriptions and accommodation. This change has resulted in standardised documentation of work arrangements across all volunteer categories and management areas. An Atisha Centre staff 'map' has also been created to display the nine management areas and relevant support teams. With regard to ongoing discussions with volunteers, a number of measures have been

introduced to address complex issues presented by both volunteers and visitors. As part of these measures, Jeannie McIntyre has been enlisted to run monthly workshops on 'Codes of conduct for dealing with unstable behaviour'. The workshops incorporate team building exercises and information about trauma and mental health. In addition to the workshops both Venerable Tsapel and Venerable Rigsal have agreed to provide confidential guidance based on Buddhist teachings if required. I extend my sincerest gratitude to all the volunteers and a special thank you to Ruby, Jeannie and Venerable Losang Dorje for their guidance and support during the year.

Alison Thomson

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR / ACCOMMODATION MANAGER

ACCOMMODATION

Atisha's Centre Accommodation is now financially sustainable. Income for this year was \$31250.00 compared to \$25847.00 from last year. There are guests staying at all times throughout the week and up to eighteen guests each weekend. Weekend guests include AirBnB customers, Study Group participants, retreatants, and visitors - largely from Melbourne or interstate. AirBnB business is steadily increasing and we are maintaining a five-star rating.

Recent additions to the accommodation include a commercial dryer installed in the laundry and an urn to mitigate against power outages during the winter. Given the rising number of visitors, there is a need to make improvements to the rooms and bedding. Recommended

improvements include professional steam cleaning to remove coffee stains from carpets, a commercial washing machine, mattress toppers on beds and shelves in the ensuite showers. The Accommodation



team presently comprises seven people working across the week to undertake promotion, bookings, check-ins, room cleaning, general cleaning and washing. I would like to thank Andy for his work in marketing and Sally, Norma, Dina, Pauline and Ken for their invaluable contribution

to the smooth running of the accommodation over the past year.

PROPERTY REPORT

Atisha Centre property, gardens and forest have benefitted from milder summers and wetter winters of the past few years and are looking very good. The trees are growing larger and are lusher than they were up to 2015, with greater canopy growth. Wildlife inhabiting the area has noticeably increased (mostly birds), and the improved environment combined with added nest boxes are a big factor in this. I have plans to add homes for lizards around the Centre so that they can find refuge from the predators (foxes and cats) which have kept their numbers at a low level. Also planned is the building of extra homes for insects and frogs.



The front entrance gardens have benefitted from a massive amount of work from Tim Lipert over the years. This year he has put in double the time that he is required for his commitments, and the gardens are looking immaculate. Unfortunately, he is due to retire in February 2019 and we rejoice in his work for the Centre and hope he enjoys the extra time he will have to go prospecting.

Maintenance of the nine buildings has continued throughout the past year. The verandah and railings of the accommodation block have been repaired and repainted after over a year of work by Bill Atherton whose steady and constant hard work has restored them to better condition than when they were first built. The kitchen, unit, library and ablution block are over 35 years of age and need a lot of repair so that they can continue to be usable into the future. The roofs of these buildings will be painted to prolong their useable life. The office and shop also need their tile roofs painted as well as the pointing on the ridge cap of office roof needs renewing.

Ian Carruthers has been working around the Centre improving paths and drainage with footbridges on path to monastery and on the path to the Stupa car park. He has also completed a roof over one of the caravans. Atisha Centre purchased a second storage container and he will be working on building a roof between the two containers to create an extra covered storage area. Ian also will be retiring in February 2019 and we will lose a very wonderful volunteer who has contributed a lot to the improvements around the Centre with his detailed and meticulous work.



Two new volunteers have joined the maintenance/grounds team this year and are contributing to the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the Centre and amenities. Paul Dunn has been assisting with various jobs and has helped maintain the Centre work vehicle and repaired an old trailer given to the

Centre. He is also working on restoring the old trailer to a useable level for wood collecting. Neil Mitting has joined us recently and has already assisted with his specialised concreting and building skills. Ken Fox has been regularly working on the gardens and paths maintaining their appearance, and there are plans for further improvements as well as ongoing regular work to keep them alive and flourishing, despite the harsh conditions



of hard clay ground and hot dry summers that exist here at Atisha Centre.

The sale of firewood and aluminium cans combined with donations has enabled the purchase of two extra water tanks. This has led to a



noticeable improvement of the water quality in the Centre due to the extra filtration from having two tanks side by side. First flush devices are being installed on the collection systems, which improves the water quality even further in combination with roof filtration, tank filtration and filters at the pump. The Centre water has never been so clean! Any further sales of firewood and cans has been, and will be, donated to the teacher fund.

The heavy, dirty work of keeping the Centre facilities functioning as a basis for bringing all beings to enlightenment, through the teachings and our collective efforts, continues for the Property Management team into the future.

Steve Williams
PROPERTY MANAGER



OFFICE



During the year there have been regular team meetings to discuss upcoming events with the various managers. These meetings are a great way to keep everyone informed about what is happening. There is always room to improve on good communication and I hope these meetings go someway towards that goal.

Team meetings have also provided the opportunity to invite our colleagues from the Great Stupa to come and talk to us about their large events, especially Illumin8 and Vegecarian Festival. I think it is very important that Atisha Centre Office and the Great Stupa team work closely together.

Atisha Centre Office always seems to be busy, whether working towards an event or just dealing with the regular day-to-day business, phones ringing; technology hiccups; visitors coming into the office etc.,

Kind regards,

Sally Mason **OFFICE MANAGER**

KITCHEN, DINING-ROOM AND COURTYARD

Over the past year our kitchen has supplied delicious vegetarian meals to our retreatants. Thank you to Helen Sleswick who tirelessly gave her time and energy to manage the kitchen and coordinate the



cooks. Helen has retired after six years as Kitchen Manager in May this year. Please rejoice in all she has done.

During Community Days and Study Group weekends we are able to offer food freely to our sangha. Community Day has continued to grow with up to 60 people attending for lunch.

A huge thank you to Norma Mitting, Helen Grundy and more recently, Dina Armbruster for assisting and maintaining our kitchen and dining area. You are all truly valued and appreciated.

Atisha Centre is very grateful to Food Share which offers food on a

weekly basis to our volunteers.

In the future...

We are looking to renovate our kitchen and expand the dining area over 2018/2019 to improve the functionality and make our cooks happier, particularly over longer retreats.

The “Wishfulfilling Jewel Café” came into existence prior to Rinpoche’s retreat. Many thanks to Liam Chambers and Paul Dunn for a very speedy piece of construction.

During the retreat we served coffee, cakes and light meals. Over winter we have opened the Café at weekends which has added to the friendly feeling and energy in the courtyard.

Many thanks to Chris Wiseman for all his work in the café and his endless supply of delicious chai.



ATISHA CENTRE CATERING ~ LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE "HEART OF WISDOM" RETREAT - 2018

The idea of providing food services to the six week retreat came about when information was provided to interested members of Atisha Centre about the tendering process for the catering contract. A detailed and competitive tender was compiled and submitted by Brian Ashen and Helen Sleswick to the Heart of Wisdom committee soon thereafter. The contract was awarded to Atisha Centre Catering Team (ACCT) to provide three meals a day plus beverages and to provide support for pujas by providing chai and ordering of fruit.



ACCT was made up of four main cooks: Sandra Robertson, who was also the Food safety supervisor, Brian Ashen, Katie Ward and Helen Grundy. The team also had a turnover of kitchen hands based on retreatants' karma yoga rosters. The kitchen hands were Helen, Mot, Pim, Chien, John, Ken, Liam, Miriam and volunteers George and Reese. All staff had food handling certificate requirements. ACCT also had a cooking permit for the retreat period from the City of Bendigo. All staff were

paid according to the appropriate award for casual wages.

ACCT provided catering for 160 to 170 residential retreatants and casual day attendees for 42 days. ACCT worked split shifts starting at 6am and finishing at 8pm. Two staff provided a breakfast service, comprised of porridge, baked beans, toast, condiments with cereals yoghurt and fruit.

Lunch, which was the largest meal of the day, had a shift of four staff and provided wholesome vegetarian meals with desserts and/or fresh fruit. The provision of high level protein in the diet was a significant priority.

The dinner-shift had two staff providing a soup-of-the-day and bread in the evening. This also was a chance for a left-over corner where lunch

foods provided the day before were reheated and made available. This proved very popular and ensured food wastage was minimal.

A portable commercial kitchen with equipment was provided by the "Heart of Wisdom" which also included an attached seven metre walk-in cool room and freezer. Also provided was a container that

doubled as an equipment and dry store. Power was provided by a diesel generator which failed several times and the ACCT acted professionally and calmly to these incidents to provide a meal service. Additional equipment was purchased by Atisha Centre so ACCT could deliver a high standard of service. Retreatants were served their meals in the adjoining dining room which was housed in the marquee provided by the Great Stupa.



On the last day of the retreat, a meal of soup, dinner rolls and water was provided to 350 attendees of the long life puja of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. This meal provision was additional to the retreat contract.

In conclusion, Atisha Centre staff and members provided a high quality food service with love, patience and understanding that only

a Buddhist catering team could offer to Buddhist retreatants.



Brian Ashen
HOW KITCHEN MANAGER

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Our current membership stands at 94. There were 89 members this time last year. We currently have nine Family Memberships, 49 Single Memberships, down from 59 last year, and 33 Single Concession Memberships, up from 17 last year. There has been quite a rise in the number of concession memberships over the past 12 months. Over 50% of our members pay on a monthly basis.

In addition to our fee-paying members we have two Lifelong Members and two Honorary Members.

Members have taken advantage of their two free nights' accommodation and continue to receive discounts on courses and shop purchases. The Mandala Magazine is sent to members twice a year.



THANK YOU TO:

- Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery;
- The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion;
- Bendigo City Council;
- Bendigo Bank;
- Bob Waterhouse;
- Star Cinema, Ron;
- Robyn McFarlane (Naturopath);
- Fitzpatrick's Hardware;
- Bunnings, Eaglehawk;
- Food Share Bendigo;
- Officeworks - Bendigo;
- Bolton's Office National;
- Cambells Cash and Carry;
- Roger King's IGA Eaglehawk;
- UFS Pharmacy;
- The florist shop in Eaglehawk;
- Bendigo Cottages;
- Liesl Malan - Architect;
- Barbara Mclean - Artist;
- Clarelee Accommodation;
- Yien Law Cartwright Optometrist;
- Micheal Chambers Deep Tread Internet;
- David Robb Planit;
- Michael and Thi Kodama (Plants);
- AASB: Accounting and Auditing Solutions Bendigo;

We thank all our members for their generosity and continued support of their Dharma centre.

Kathy Rice
MEMBERSHIP MANAGER



KADAMPA STUPA PROJECT

Lama Zopa Rinpoche suggested that Atisha Centre build a Kadampa stupa, and in 2014 chose an auspicious site on the path to the Monastery to the west of Atisha Centre's *gompa*.



Building began in early 2017, thanks to the generous financial support of individual donors, FPMT International, and the fundraising coordinated by Brian Ashen.

In November, Ricciardo Ferrari returned and together with volunteer support rendered the half built structure with a smooth finish.

The informal gathering of filling materials continues, as does fundraising. We now have a nearly final draft

of fillings required, and are working towards a detailed building plan and budget. We will then be publicly calling for contributions to the filling and financial support.

Once the fillings have been gathered, and substantial funds raised, we will fill the base and cap it, and begin the completion of the main structure, and decoration.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has kindly donated several relics for the stupa!

One of the beneficial effects of Kadampa stupas is the promotion of peace and harmony in the local area. Another is enormous purification for its supporters. Please get involved!

Love and peace to you all,

Peter Lane

KADAMPA STUPA PROJECT COORDINATOR



Artist's impression

MACHIG LABDRON NUNS' COMMUNITY

Plans for an 11 bedroom nuns' community building were completed in November 2016, and the site Master Plan was submitted to Council a year later, following completion of other plans for Atisha Centre and the Great Stupa. At that stage there were no nuns living at Atisha Centre; in February this year both Venerable Rigdal and I became permanent residents.

In April, Lama Zopa Rinpoche confirmed the site for the nuns' building



(see site plan). And in May at the conclusion of his six week teaching retreat Rinpoche very kindly offered AU\$11,000 to Machig Labdron, as well as his life-size White Tara statue (see page 13), offered to Rinpoche during his Long-life puja by FPMT International Office. The statue is displayed in the Atisha Centre gumpa for now.

In May we received a response from Bendigo City Council regarding our Master Plan. They require that a number of compliance issues, from

earlier permits, be addressed, and that the current plan comply with new fire and environment regulations passed early in 2018, after our Master Plan was submitted. Atisha Centre and the Great Stupa mainly need to revise the new building priorities, reduce the overall building footprint, and consolidate new building together and/or with existing building to better preserve the environment. The sewage and water systems must be installed before any other larger projects can go ahead.

Atisha Centre Board Chairman, Trevor Smith, is now employed two days a week by the Great Stupa to work on the Master Plan for the whole site, with a view to resubmitting it. Atisha Centre Master Plan sub-committee workshopped with local landscape architects, and will continue to address the issues raised by Council and the best way forward.

We may be able to build on the same site as planned, perhaps with a reduced footprint. Rigdal and I are also considering a second seven hectare piece of land adjacent to the overall site. We have sought design help from a builder/architect for that site, but the availability and feasibility of building there is not clear at this stage.

Machig Labdron is a big project with various issues to work through, and both Rigdal and I are keen to see the building project move ahead and be completed. We are inspired by Rinpoche's support for our project, and appreciate the ongoing support of the three FPMT centres on the site, and our wider Buddhist community.

Tenzin Tsapel
MACHIG LABDRON NUNS' COMMUNITY



FINANCES 2018

*T*REASURER'S REPORT

I am pleased to report that Atisha Centre is in an improved and stable financial position as at 30 June 2018 compared to 2017. Our Finance Manager, Wendy Buchan, has provided in her report, some good insight into the significant income and expense items relating to Atisha Centre operating activities. Key financial statistics as at 30 June 2018 include:

- Cash in the bank (all accounts) balance of \$234,000 is significantly up versus \$126,000 last year and \$47,000 in 2016. Approximately \$138,000 of this balance is held for 'committed' purposes, in particular donations for the planned nunnery, and is not therefore available for day-to-day spending.
- This is a very pleasing result and is substantially a result of the very successful Lama Zopa Rinpoche retreat. A huge effort by Board members and volunteers to run the retreat catering, coffee shop and bookshop, and to provide additional accommodation for retreatants has generated significant income for Atisha. The improved financial position enables the

Board to focus longer term on improving facilities and infrastructure.

- However, the Board is still very mindful that outside of events such as large retreats, Atisha Centre still operates just above break-even so we need to continue to be frugal with spending.
- The improved financial controls implemented last year have proven their value during the very busy time around the retreat and other busy events.

I am confident that over the coming year, Atisha Centre's financial position will remain stable.

Regards,

Tom Castles
TREASURER

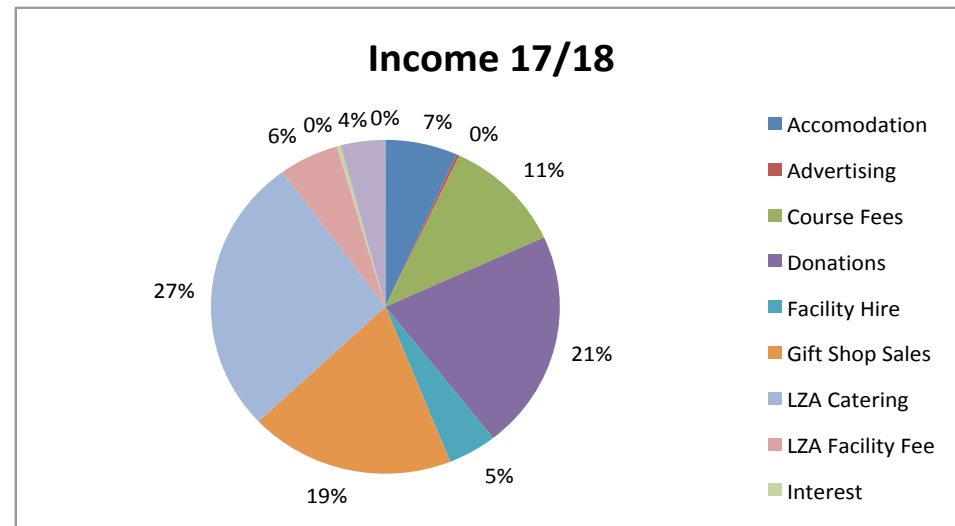
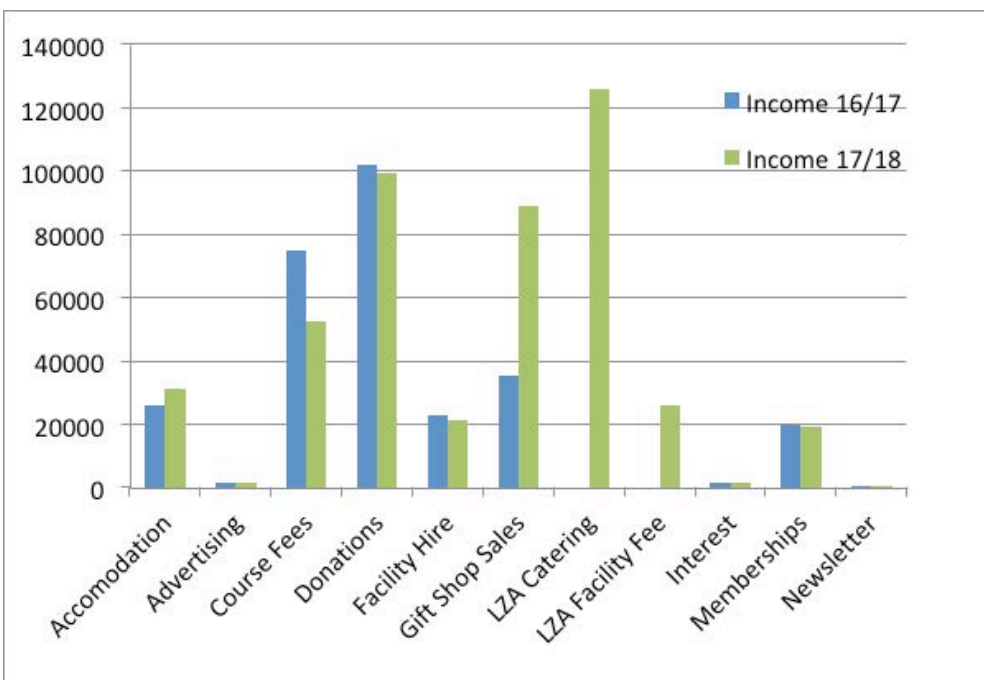


FINANCIAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The 2017/18 financial year has seen the Atisha Centre report an increase in profit compared to last year. A large proportion of this is due to the profit from catering at the Lama Zopa retreat. Accommodation income has continued to increase. Gift Shop income also increased significantly this year as a result of high sales during the Lama Zopa retreat. We also received significant donation from LZR of 8K.

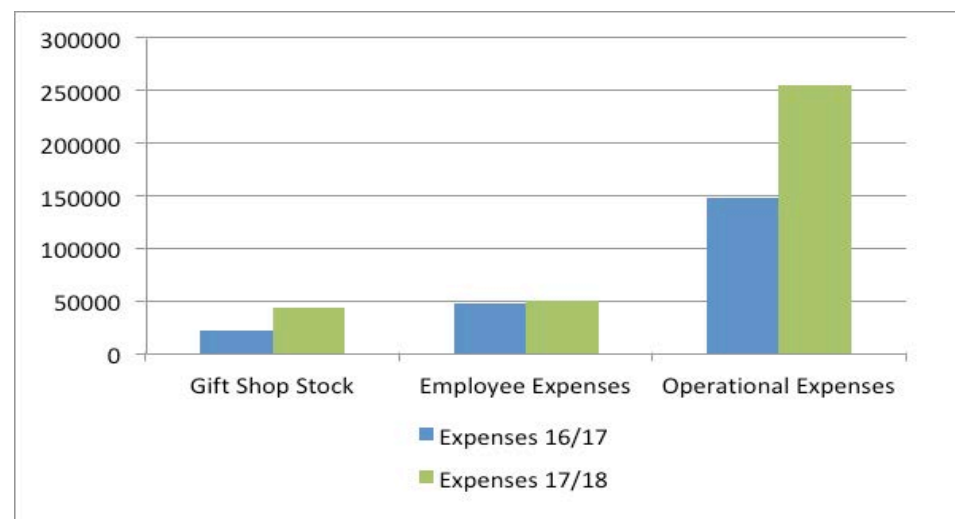
There was a decrease in course fees throughout the year which can be mostly accounted for by being unable to run the usual program and retreat during the six weeks of the Lama Zopa retreat.

Facility Hire and Membership income has remained steady

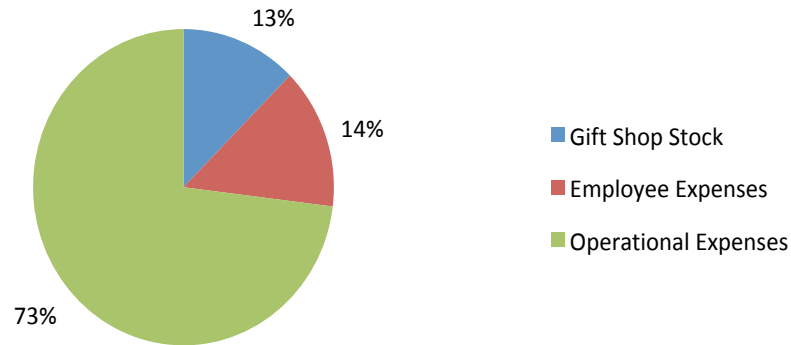


As a result of the Lama Zopa Rinpoche retreat, there was a large increase in operational expenses of approximately \$106,000. The majority of this relates to the catering expenses and wages for the retreat. There is also a significant increase of \$10,000 in utilities.

Due to the high turnover of stock during the Lama Zopa retreat, there was also an increase in stock expenses.



Expenses 17/18



Monthly recurrent payments include:

- Insurance \$1092
- FPMTA Levy \$388
- IT assistance \$50
- Photocopy Hire \$208

Offerings are also made on a regular basis including:

- \$50 to TSL Monastery
- Offerings to Sangha for meditations, teachings and retreats
- Geshe and translator offerings (\$1100/fnt) and insurance expenses (\$554/mth)
- Long life Pujas for HHDL and Lama Zopa Rinpoche
- Light offerings
- And other times throughout the year as required.

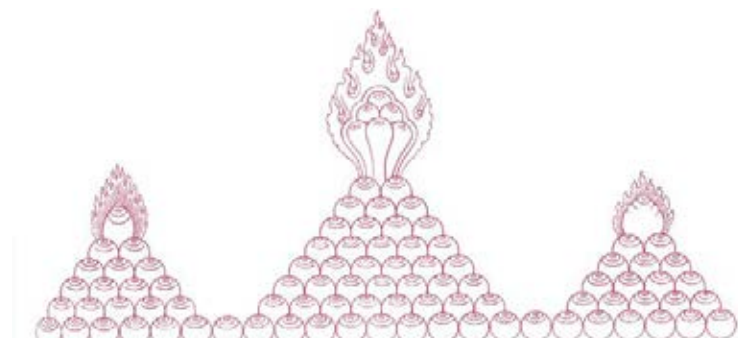
*P*RACTISING GENEROSITY AS A CENTRE: 2017 - 2018

A percentage of the income from our yoga courses and larger donations have been redirected back into our community this year.

Offering have been made to:

- Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery;
- Food Share Bendigo;
- International Mahayana Sangha Inc;
- Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive;
- Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Merit Box Project;
- His Holiness Dalai Lama's Long-life;
- Great Stupa of Universal Compassion.

Wendy Buchan
FINANCIAL MANAGER



ATISHA CENTRE STAFF

BOARD

CENTRE DIRECTOR: Ruby Karmay

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME COORDINATOR: Andy Melnic

CHAIR PERSON: Trevor Smith

TREASURER: Tom Castles (outgoing)

SECRETARY: Nic Aunger

BOARD MEMBER:

MACHIG LABDRON NUNNERY: Venerable Tsapel

FINANCE and ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE MANAGER: Sally Mason

FINANCE MANAGER: Wendy Buchan

MEMBERSHIP: Kathy Rice

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME

SPC: Andy Melnic

GOMPA MANAGER:

SHOP MANAGER: Tim Allen

LIBRARY: Johanna Winchcomb

TUESDAY NIGHT MEDITATION COORDINATOR: Cilla Brady

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM COORDINATOR: Carol Donne

FRIDAY MEDITATION COORDINATOR: Carol Donne

DINING AND CATERING

KITCHEN MANAGER: Vacant

PUBLICITY

WEBSITE: Andy Melnic

NEWSLETTER: Andy Melnic

FACEBOOK - Ingrid Sorum

GROUNDS

PROPERTY MANAGER: Steve Williams

VOLUNTEERS COORDINATION

VOLUNTEERS COORDINATOR: Alison Thomson

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IT CONSULTANT: Michael Chambers

ACCOMMODATION

ACCOMMODATION MANAGER: Alison Thomson

MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING

COORDINATOR: Sally Mason

MASTER PLAN

COMMITTEE: Ruby Karmay, Venerable Tsapel, Andy Melnic, Peter Lane, Steve Williams

PROJECTS

MERIT BOX: Helen Sleswick

KADAMPA STUPA: Peter Lane

THANK YOU

Atisha Centre would like to express the deepest gratitude and appreciation to all our teachers, members, supporters, volunteers, friends and benefactors. Your kindness helps provide the conditions needed to carry out Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's great vision for the Centre and the FPMT organisation. Our accomplishments are the direct result of your generosity and commitment to the Centre. May we all rejoice together.



Atisha Centre Inc. No. A0045465N / ABN 44 568 476 377

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