Atisha Centre

Atisha Buddhist Centre

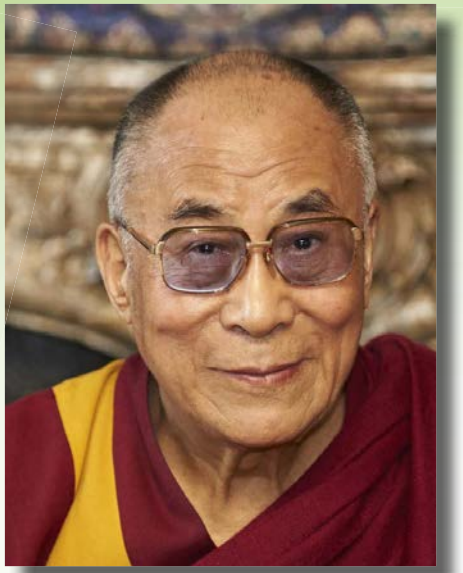


‘A Land for Completing the Human Potential’

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Annual Review 2026

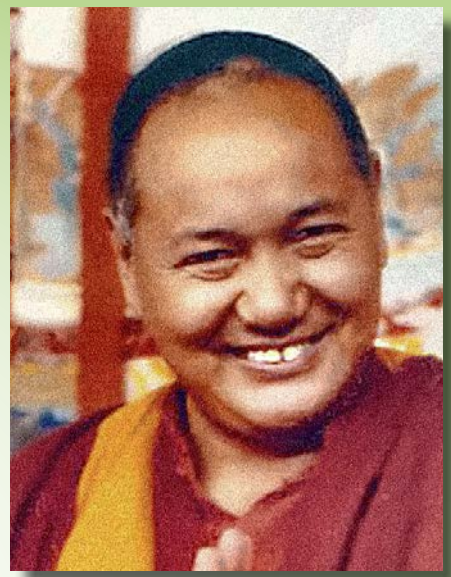




Our Spiritual Leader
His Holiness Dalai Lama



Our Inspiration and Founder
Kyabje Thubten Zopa Rinpoche



Our Inspiration and Founder
Lama Thubten Yeshe Rinpoche

"The I that experiences happiness and suffering, that walks, talks, eats, sits and sleeps is nothing other than what has been merely labeled by the mind..

"The purpose of your life is to free all sentient beings from all their suffering and bring them to full enlightenment."

Kyabje Thubten Zopa Rinpoche



Our Resident Teacher
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 Tsongkhapa.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

> "When a strong wind blows, the clouds vanish and blue sky appears. Similarly, when the powerful wisdom that understands the nature of the mind arises, the dark clouds of ego disappear."
>
> *Lama Thubten Yeshe*

Hello Dearest Community,

It has been a year of many changes at Atisha Centre on a personal level and infrastructure level.

Firstly, I would like to thank Venerable Lhawang for her service as Spiritual Programme Coordinator and helping to create a rich and diverse Dharma programme, as she stepped out of the role in January 2026.



In April, Atisha Centre hosted a succesful FPMTA meeting in the gompa and most centres in Australia and New Zeland were represented over the 3-day workshop on FPMT workplace health and safety. It was very inspiring to hear about the positive happenings at each centre and the challenges.

Atisha Centre continues to be a busy retreat centre serving community retreats from other traditions, faiths and a regular ongoing programme of Dharma study and reflection, with Geshe Rabten and translator Venerable Dorje. The programme and its retreats have been well attended.

The Centre hosted a 3-week Vajrayogini retreat in September, led by Venerable Tsapel and 28 practioners participated in the retreat.

Another highlight was the official opening of Machig Labdron Nunnery in July 2026, with many visiting geshes, such as Geshe Doga and our Geshe Rabten. Geshe Zopa was *umze* for the series of pujas. Many people travelled from all over Australia to attend the opening.

Mingyur Rinpoche led a retreat at the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion in September. It was beautifully organised by the Tergar community and over 250 people were in attendance for the 5-day event. Many more attended the intiations at the end of the retreat. Atisha Centre ran a pop-up chai/coffee/cakes shop that was well frequented by retreatants.

Donations and increasing attendance at events have allowed Atisha Centre to remain in a healthy financial position throughout 2026.

I officially stepped into the role of Director after an SPC apprentership, indeed a daunting task, but a rare privelage to work within a Dharma centre and cultivate a team of visionary activists, after some practical planning and with the Board's willingness, we embarked on a plan of

renewal to benefit Atisha Centre long into the future.

Carrying on a legacy of all the previous Boards, directors, SPC's, teachers, translators, members, volunteers and visitors' good will.

As you know, Atisha Centre has now been linked into the Great Stupa sewage network via our new underground pipe-works and other infrastructure is connected.

New toilet and shower oudoor units will arrive mid-November and will be strategically placed around the property for ease of use and to service key accommodation areas.



We have added 15 kilowatts of power through rooftop solar on the dining room and a new shed with 40 kilowatts of storage, all linked via smart technology.

We now have 20 kilowatts of power being stored in the daytime when sunny and can draw on through the night, reducing our power bill.

There is a new upgrade to add cables underground for electricity to the new yurt village and down to the tiny house area.

The whole area will benefit with a new power box upgrade for campers and a toilet/shower block. For exisiting residents this will allow more access for charging devices, lighting and there will be a waste dump point for van campers.

Lastly, I would like to thank all our managers on the ground here at Atisha Centre, who work tirelessly to offer a quality experience for all members and volunteers.

A big thank you to our residents who are called on often to fufill many tasks beyond their specific roles - super amazing efforts, with big hearts and kind minds.

In Joy,

Nick Redmond
Centre Director



Message from the Board - *Chair*

We respectfully acknowledge the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional custodians of the land on which Atisha Centre resides, and we pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Dear Friends,

Another busy year with lots of events, quite a few Centre improvements and many changes, especially in personel and volunteers.

The Board has seen a number of adjustments. I resigned as Centre Director at the beginning of this year and Venerable Lhawang resigned as Spiritual Programme Coordinator. Nick bravely stepped in, first to the role of SPC and then switched to Director in May. Also, Jackie stepped down as Treasurer in the middle of the year. Since then we have been supporting each other with the vacant roles. The Treasurer role is still unfilled but has been care-taken by Brian and Judith-Ann. The SPC role (also unfilled) has now been cared of by a team of volunteers, successfully planning and preparing events. Hopefully, the empty Board roles will be filled by the end of this AGM. We are anticipating a new SPC this month (November).

Many thanks to all the Board Members, Centre management and all our volunteers for their hard work to keep the Centre alive and fulfilling Rinpoche's aims.

Andy Melnic
Board Chair



Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Stupa at Kopan Monastery, Kathmandu

Spiritual Programme



The year of 2025 is now the third year since our most kind guru, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche passed away. It is powerful and beneficial to remember the phenomenal number of projects and activities that Rinpoche achieved in his lifetime purely to benefit other beings. His influence and presence remains with us very strongly in hearts and minds. Rinpoche continues to be our holy Spiritual Director. We continue to recite the *Swift Return Prayer* at the end of all events in Atisha Centre gompa and pray that Rinpoche will continue to spread the Dharma throughout the ten directions.

We have had yet another very busy, programme event year.

Once again, many thanks to our wonderful teacher, Venerable Geshe Rabten and his superb translator Venerable Lobsang Dorje, for many hours of teachings on traditional texts and instructions.

Everything Geshela has taught continues to be recorded and made available (for posterity) to everyone for replaying and personal study.

Many thanks for the continued programme support from the nuns from Machig Labdron Nunnery and the monks at Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery. As always, we are very grateful to all the volunteers and coordinators of our different events.

Our weekly programme:

- Wednesday Night Teachings from Geshe Rabten with his commentary on Shantideva's famous text *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* - "Engaging in the Bodhisattva's Way of Life". Thank you to Kathy Rice for coordinating Wednesday Night and Study Group.
- Tuesday Meditations in Bendigo led this year by a number of presenters.
- Sunday Meditations has continued to be led by a team of different meditation leaders: We are very grateful to everyone who provides this wonderful opportunity for people to meet the Dharma through meditation in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Thank you to our chai makers Bel, Orsen, Helen and Rose.
- "Prayers for the Deceased" (monthly) has been led by Venerable Drime and Venerable Nangsel.



During the opening of Machig Labron Nunnery

This year, our programme has included the following events and topics:

- A Tibetan Medicine weekend in July last year incorporating Guru Rinpoche Day, led by Tibetan doctor Menla Pema Gyältsen;

- A Winter Retreat with Genla on “Parting from the Four Clingings” in July last year;
- A Calm Abiding Retreat with Venerable Tsapel;
- In August we were very fortunate to receive a visit from His Eminence Ling Rinpoche;
- In September last year, we were blessed to welcome Jhado Rinpoche who gave Kalachakra initiation in the Great Stupa. This was followed by a packed Kalachakra retreat in Atisha Centre’s gompa;
- Last year’s Spring Retreat with Geshe Rabten was on the Eight Verses of Mind Training by Geshe Langri Tangpa;
- This year’s annual Chenrezig Retreat was led by Venerable Tsapel;
- In February Martin Ström led a weekend course called “Boundless Heart”;
- A special all-night Tara Night led by Andy Melnic over the Day of Miracles in February;
- Introduction to Buddhism with Venerable Jampa in March;
- Our Easter Retreat in April led by Genla was on Geshe Chekawa’s “The Seven Point Mind Training”;
- In April we Celebrated Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remembering his passing;
- Also in April we hosted the 2026 FPMTA regional meeting in our gompa - very well attended;
- In May we had our first Purification Retreat long weekend, with a medley of practices;
- Also in May we had a “4 Close Placement of Mindfulness Retreat”;
- Over Sakadawa, leading up to the Main Sakadawa day we held 3 Nyung Nas;
- A second Witer Retreat in this period continued the verses from the Dhammapada

Thank you to all our wonderful coordinators, leaders and drivers.

Holy Days: Chokyur Duchen, Lhabab Duchen, Losar, Sakadawa and Lama Tsongkhapa da.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s 91st birthday celebration was well-attended, with Geshe Rabten giving an inspirational talk about His Holiness’s life and great deeds. Venerable Tsapel led us in prayers.

Regular pujas (Guru, Medicine Buddha, Tara) led by Venerable Tsapel and Venerable Drime. Set-ups and support given by Venerable Choying.

This year, our Buddhist Study Group topic from Genla has continued: “Middle Length Lam Rim“, a commentary on the text by Lama Tsongkhapa, explaining in great depth the stages on the path to enlightenment. Genla’s great attention to detail makes this a very rich and inspiring course of meditation and pure practice of Dharma.

“Lama’s Dharma Shop”, our book and gifts shop, continues to improve and gets more exciting all the time, under the management of Bel Howe.

Thank you to Katrina Jenkins-Baker for your work as Gompa Manager at Atisha Centre. Thank you to all those who support and participate in the programme.

Andy Melnic
pp: Spiritual Programme



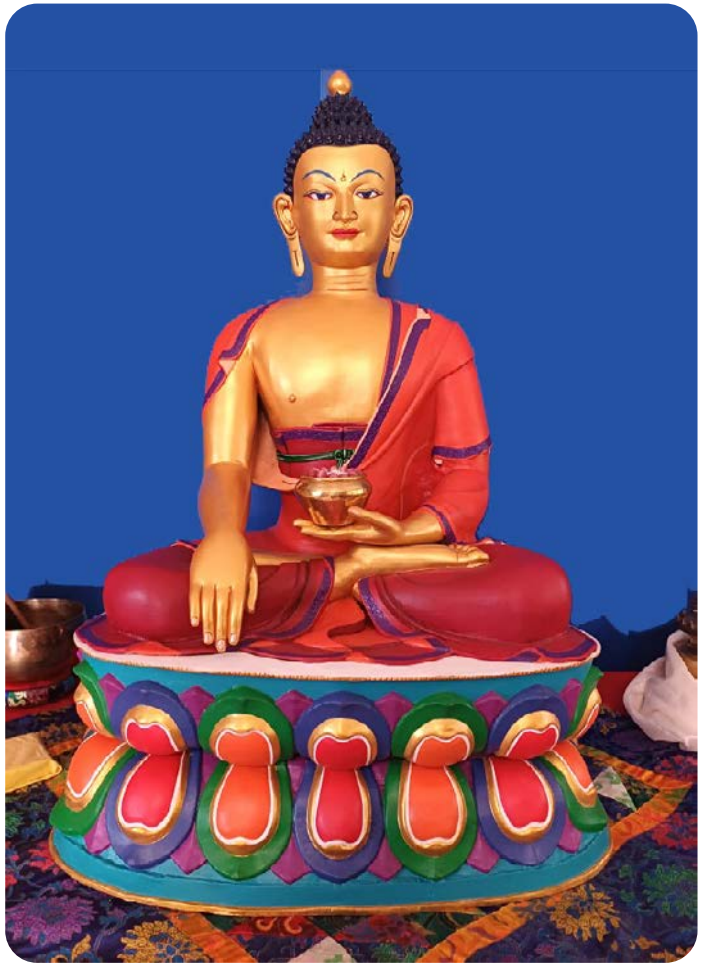
Library



Atisha Centre Library has continued in 2026 providing opportunities for retreat participants and members to borrow books. Additionally, a full stocktake of the catalogue and digitising of historical photos is almost complete, and a slide presentation of the first 20 years of Atisha Centre was recently sent to FPMT as part of their 50th celebration request.

We recently had two new bookcases to increase our general book storage capacity, but our reference library bookcase has reached it's maximum. The Chorton Newsletters continue to be sent to the State Library of Victoria, and historical interviews are recorded when the opportunity arises. We continue to receive donated books and one from an early pioneer of Atisha Centre then enabled some additional history to be documented. A donation of early photos and art works that required archiving, was transferred to the Great Stupa Library who advised that they may be included in the Tibetan Museum located within the Great Stupa.

The highlight of our year was the return of the Shakyamuni Buddha statue after a much needed repaint, and our grateful thanks goes to Lucy Wang, artist at the Great Stupa, for all the work and hours she gave to this project. Our thanks also to Kevin, Bob and Nick and Bel for getting the very heavy statue back to its original home. My thanks also go to the library volunteers, Gail, Sarah, Aileen, Christine and Viv, for all their work over the past year and to the members, guests, residents and sangha for their continued support of the library.



The Library's Shakyamuni Buddha Statue

Pauline Walden
Library Manager

LAMA'S DHARMA SHOP

Lama's Dharma Shop truly is the gift that keeps on giving.



Not just a shop, but a place of camaraderie and storytelling, friendship, laughter, (and tears), and sometimes…a special place of retreat…away from retreat… when people gush through the door for a moment of chatty self-affirmation and retail therapy, searching for that one item to ease them back into a state of normality. (retreats can be hard)

Thank goodness there are no knickknacks here to lead them astray, just great books and quality items for their Buddhist practice.

Our 'not just a shop' turned over more than $95,000 in the 2025/26 financial year with the support and assistance of our amazingly reliable team of volunteers. We couldn't do it without them, and much appreciation goes to Darren, Claire, Cilla, Warwick, Fiona, Krishnaleela, Jacinda, Lou and Pauline.

I feel fortunate to have such a great team.

In gratitude,

Bel Howe
Shop Manager



Gardens

Cut it back, pick it up, turn it over, plant it out. Rake it, sort it, tidy it, build it, compost it…and most impotently, remember to water it!



With all the difficulties in life it is a balm to sit and listen for melodies on the wind, smell the soft scents of flowers in bloom and watch bees buzz past on their wandering way. Time slows in places like this, and slow is a remedy much needed in a too busy world.

When I took on the Community Garden in 2025, and later the Atisha Garden proper, my main incentive was to provide Atisha Centre with a feeling of cultivating joy and relaxation, welcome and belonging.

The Atisha Garden, and specifically, the Community Garden have received more compliments than I could ever have imagined. It is both pleasure and reward to see people enjoying the changes as they occur and hear gratitude so free flowing, and I look forward many more days of leisure (working) in the garden.

Many thanks to all who have helped along the way…

Jim, Maree, Krishnaleela, Jacinda, Koula, our lovely nuns, Lhawang, Drolma & Drime, David, Duncan, Kemal, Lorri, Kev, Jon, Shaz, Rheese, Simon, Kylie, Tess, Andy H, Jonathon, Nick, Carie, Mitch, Yeshe, Cameron, Kathi, Laura, Gerald, Amber, Austin, Katrina, Carmen, Kate, Rose and Lola. With extra gratitude to anyone not mentioned. Thank you.

In gratitude,

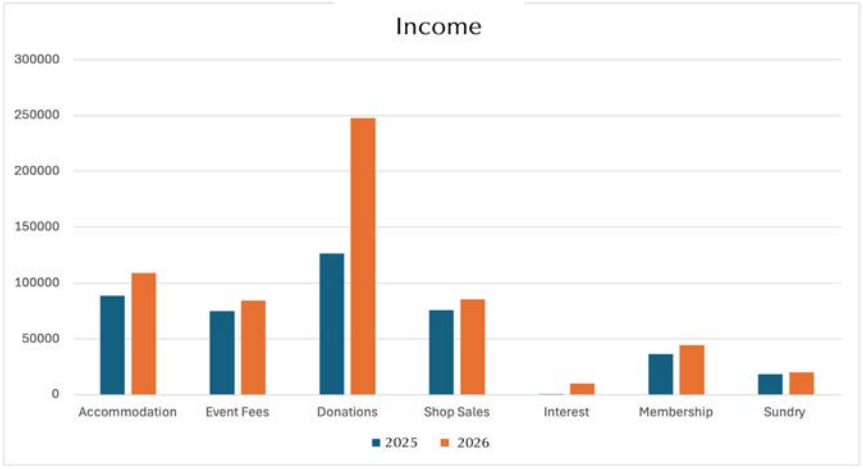
Bel Howe
Garden Manager



FINANCES 2025/26

FINANCIAL REPORT

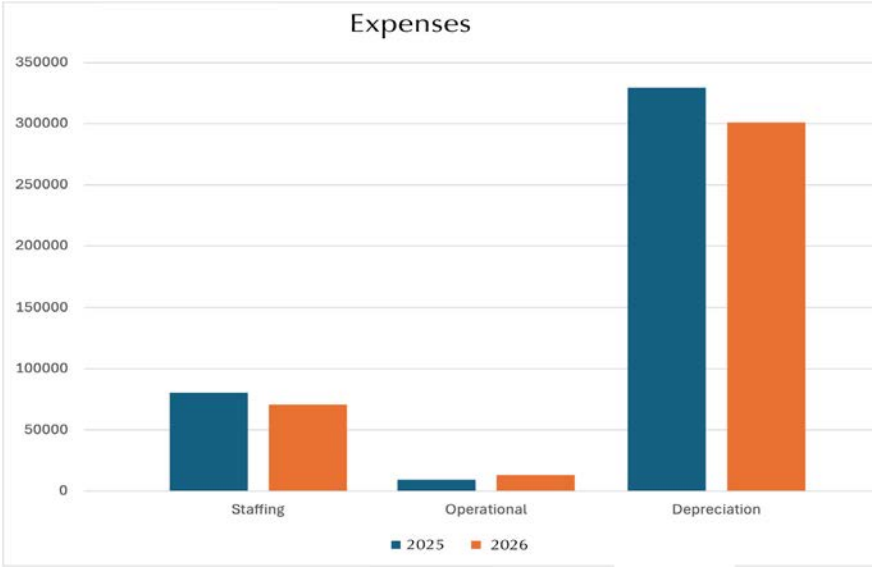
Thanks, in part, to a generous donation from Heart of Wisdom, the Centre had an exceptionally strong year, recording a net surplus of $184,739, a turnaround from the $12,591 deficit in 2025 and the $4,603 surplus in 2024. Net assets rose from $447,970 to $632,709. Cash and bank balances grew to $408,971, and total liabilities are only $13,399.



Income: $601,397 (up 34%)

Income rose by $152,086, nearly three-quarters of it from General Donations, which jumped from $19,564 to $130,091. A gift of this size is unlikely to repeat, so members should treat it as a boost rather than a new baseline. Without it, income would have been about $471,000 and the surplus about $54,600.

Core activities also grew: accommodation rose 21% to $103,389, programme event fees 13% to $84,509, membership 23% to $44,548, and shop sales 13% to $85,765 (Dharma sales up 36%). Interest income rose to $9,841 from $618, and Gompa and Golden Buddha Restoration donations increased. Teachers' Fund donations fell to $25,267, Kadampa Stupa donations fell to $185 as the project wound down, and there was no Yamantaka Retreat, which brought in $28,174 in 2025.



Expenses: $416,658 (down 10%)

Costs fell by $45,244, largely because several 2025 items did not recur: the Yamantaka Retreat, the Kadampa Stupa project, legal and professional fees, and depreciation. The largest ongoing costs were:

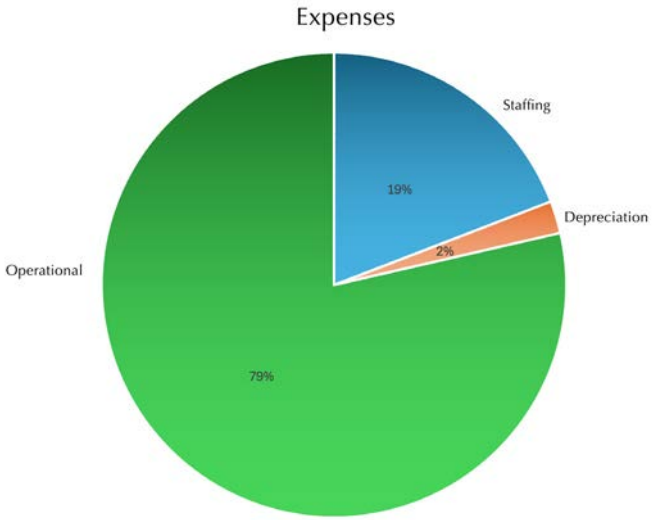
Geshe and Translator offerings: $81,280 / Staffing: about $94,600 / Shop stock: $42,271 / Utilities: about $31,100 (up from $24,600) / Offerings from the Centre: $27,944 (up from $19,533) / Insurance: $26,665, well above 2024 / Maintenance: $20,622 (up from $10,350)

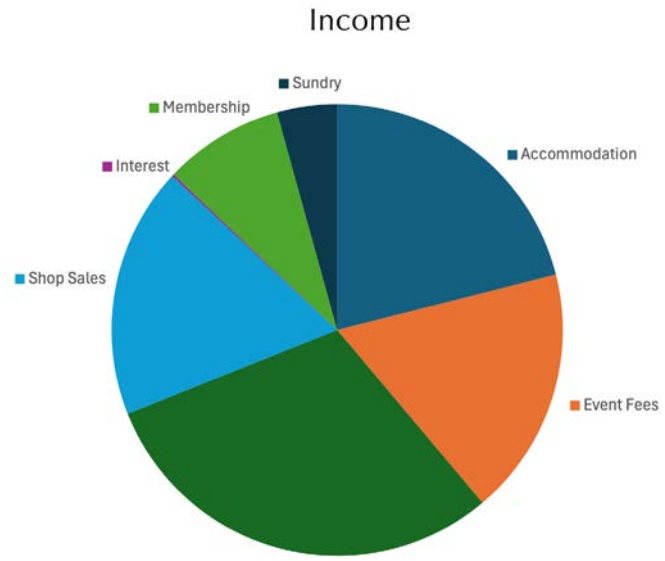
Assets are up $177,055. Bank balances rose $141,835.

Liabilities: $13,399 (down from $21,083).

Cash equals roughly 12 months of operating expenses, and the Centre has real capacity to fund projects. Two points deserve attention: the surplus relies heavily on the exceptional donation, and utilities, maintenance, offerings and insurance costs are trending upward.

Conclusion: The Centre ends the year in its strongest 3-year position.









Andy Melnic
Chair

pp Treasurer

ATISHA CENTRE PERSONNEL

BOARD

CENTRE DIRECTOR: Nick Redmond

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME COORDINATOR: Vacant

CHAIR: Andy Melnic

VICE-CHAIR: Pauline Walden

TREASURER: Vacant (Outgoing: Jackie Michael)

SECRETARY: Carmela Quimbo

ORDINARY MEMBERS: Stephanie McGrane, Brian Ashen, Martin Ström

FINANCE and ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE MANAGER / OFFICE ASSISTANT: Jan Stewart and Pauline Walden

FINANCE MANAGER: Bendigo Bookkeeping

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR: Rebecca Maes

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME

SPC: Vacant

GOMPA MANAGER: Kathi Melnic (Outgoing Katrina Jenkins-Baker)

SHOP MANAGER: Bel Howe

LIBRARY MANAGER: Pauline Walden

PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR: Gail Haig

STUDY GROUP COORDINATOR: Kathy Rice

DINING AND CATERING

KITCHEN MANAGER: Vacant (OUTGOING: Robert Leisk)

VOLUNTEERING

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR: Grant Buckerfield (OUTGOING: Pauline Walden)

PUBLICITY

WEBSITE: Andy Melnic

NEWSLETTER: Nick Redmond

MAINTENANCE AND GROUNDS

PROPERTY MANAGER: Vacant (Outgoing Duncan Large and Kevin Haines)

GARDENS AND GROUNDS COORDINATOR: Bel Howe (Outgoing Ken Fox)

COMMUNITY GARDENS COORDINATOR: Bel Howe

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IT CONSULTANT: Micheal Chambers

ACCOMMODATION

ACCOMMODATION MANAGER: Neung Supol (Outgoing Peter Lane)

PROJECTS

HOLY OBJECTS COORDINATOR: Venerable Tenzin Choying



THANK YOU

Atisha Centre would like to express the deepest gratitute 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

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