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*When bodhisattvas who live a householder's life cultivate the practices of home-leavers, it is like a lotus blooming in fire. It will always be hard to tame the will for fame and rank and power and position, not to mention all the myriad starting points of vexation and turmoil associated with the burning house of worldly existence. The only way is for you yourself to realise your fundamental, real, wondrous wholeness and reach the stage of great calm and stability and rest.*

*Yuan-Wu (1063-1135)*

# Sydney Zen Centre Newsletter



## Practice Leader Positions Created

As foreshadowed last year, at its first meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1999 the new SZC board passed a motion that created the new Practice Leader role, so bringing to fruition the work of many sangha members over a period of a few years. The motion reads as follows:

### MOTION FOR CHANGES TO SZC LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

#### PREAMBLE

Inasmuch as the Board of Directors is committed to a revision of the way that responsibilities are shared within the SZC, and seeks to distribute responsibility as widely as possible within the sangha, and seeks to actively encourage participation of all sangha members in every facet of the SZC's activities, and further, inasmuch as the board is committed to meeting the needs of both current sangha members and newcomers to the SZC, the following motion is put:

a) that an **OFFICE** of 'Practice Leader' be created, and that this office be maintained by a pool of up to six persons at any one time. The new office shall be named 'Practice Leader' in accordance with the wishes of a majority of respondents

to the 1999 Board's survey; and, further, that the present office of Dharma Leader, initiated by John Tarrant Roshi, and carried out so diligently and scrupulously by the incumbents, be herewith dissolved; and that:

b) **MIMIMUM ELIGIBILITY** all SZC members, including both koan and Shikantaza students, will be eligible for these positions; and that:

#### c) SUPERVISION

At any time, the Principal Teacher of the SZC will be responsible for supervision of the Practice Leaders, but may delegate that supervisory role in whole or in part, as need befits. (In what follows, when the role of 'Supervisor' is mentioned this should be deemed to refer also to a delegated Supervisor); and that:

#### d) DUTIES

the focus of the role be on supporting Zen Buddhist practice; that is, the role is to serve the SZC practice community. The duties of the position will be determined by the SZC's Principal Teacher and the Board, in ongoing consultation, but broadly speaking, the pool of Practice Leaders will fulfil the functions of:

- Orienting newcomers & visitors to the SZC on a weekly basis;
- One-to-one interviews with beginners on meditation posture, breath-counting, shikantaza, and mindfulness practice in daily life;
- Attendance at the main dojo (currently Annandale), and being responsive to the needs of the practice community in that context;
- Facilitating discussion groups or on-going classes in Buddhist Studies when needed;
- Offering Dharma talks (primarily at Zazenkai), on the invitation of the Supervisor;
- Travelling to lead Zazenkai in non-metropolitan areas;
- Offering and encouraging dojo leadership training;
- Assisting development of harmonious sangha relations;
- Being open and responsive to the needs of the practice community, as they arise;
- Providing orientation to beginners prior to sesshin, and undertaking appropriate follow-up activities after sesshin;
- Giving introductory talks in the wider community - high schools, university, and other community organisations;
- And, other duties at the invitation of, and in consultation with, the Practice Leader Supervisor; and that:

#### e) APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

the appointment of individuals to this office will be conducted in the following manner: the Principal Teacher of the SZC suggests candidates for the positions to the Board of Directors for endorsement, and ratification; members of the community may nominate a member for the position, through a private nomination to the Principal Teacher, who must be in agreement with the nomination; the teacher will pass these nominations on to the board with her/his approval; and, following the endorsement process, the Board will notify the sangha of the intended appointments by publishing them in the next SZC newsletter. Subsequent ratification in office of the prevailing appointees will occur in the Board meeting following such publication; and that:

#### f) TENURE

these positions, having no formal link with the process of emergence of teachers within the SZC, will have a limited tenure - maximum three-year terms, with a minimum of one year off between any two three-year terms. A process of staggered successions as much as possible is to be maintained, so that mentoring of incoming Practice Leaders is possible by incumbent members of the group; and that:

#### g) DUAL OFFICE

Practice Leaders are not excluded from the holding of other offices within the SZC, but it is expected that conflicts of interest in the execution of such duties should be mediated by the

Practice Leader Supervisor in consultation with the Board; and that

#### h) RESOLVING COMPLAINTS, DISPUTES AND BREACHES OF ETHICS CONCERNING LEADERS

the Practice Leaders will be accountable both to the SZC's Principal Teacher, and to the community through the Board; and that their conduct generally should accord with the Precepts of the community; and that the Practice Leaders are bound by whatever ethical or disciplinary codes, and whatever processes of complaint and dispute resolution, are in force in the SZC at the time of any behaviour subject to complaint by a member of the community; and that:

i) the process of appointing Practice Leaders may begin at any time henceforth.

Motion put forward by: John Perrin

Motion seconded by: Richard Sandilands

Motion passed unanimously; secretary noted dissent of Paul Maloney as to the use of the title "Leader".

21<sup>st</sup> December 1999.



Shakyamuni: The home-leaver "is unsustained by anything in the world. Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is unbound right within."

Anguttara Nikaya, 7:58

