

February - March 2000

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Australia

# Sydney Zen Centre Newsletter



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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)

## 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) **MINIMUM 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 on-going 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 to 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

## 1999 Diamond Sangha Teachers Circle Ethics Agreement

As students of the Way and teachers of the Diamond Sangha, we aspire to right conduct in every aspect of our lives. In this aspiration, we have committed ourselves to maintain the Ten Grave Precepts, and we cannot improve upon them as guides and standards for our thoughts, words, and deeds. The Precepts are open to interpretation, however, so with this Ethics Agreement, we establish a clear and specific set of minimum expectations to which we should be held accountable now and in the future. We hope that publicly specifying these standards of behavior will sharpen our awareness of ethical issues, ensure the trustworthiness of the Diamond Sangha, and serve to protect and perpetuate the Buddha-dharma.

### **Mind Moon Circle**

Contributions are needed for the next issue of *Mind Moon Circle* on the theme of **Psychotherapy & Buddhist Practice**. I'd like to explore the relationship to the practice of Buddha-Dharma of the practice of Psychotherapy. Feel free to send anything related.

Let's share our views and doubts about psychotherapy & Buddhist practice, or on aspects of their relationship.

Contributions of artworks, poems, etc welcome.

**Deadline: 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2000.** Contributions to MMC Editor, (Chris McLean), c/- Sydney Zen Centre, 251 Young St, Annandale.  
2038.

We recognize that our work is founded on trust-the trust placed in us, each by our own teacher, to transmit the Dharma faithfully and the trust placed in us by our students to provide them respectful and appropriate instruction. In this document, we concern ourselves explicitly with the latter trust, but we know full well that the two are inseparable; that is, we cannot hope to fulfill our responsibility to transmit the Dharma if we do not endeavor to live up to the Dharma's ethical implications.

We understand that, in our capacity as Zen teachers, we may fail our students in many ways and to vastly differing degrees. At one end of the range of severity are isolated errors and instances of neglect; it is quite possible, for example, to disappoint a student keenly by forgetting to return a telephone call. While we consider even the slightest failure unfortunate, as fallible beings we will all inevitably suffer lapses of this sort and simply have to be forgiven. The failures that concern us more, and that this Agreement is intended to address, are of greater severity-those that are demonstrably harmful to our students, either to their practice or to their general well-being, either to one individual or to a group. We commit ourselves to refrain altogether from such injurious conduct but especially from any that is intentional, repeated or protracted in duration,

deceitfully concealed, exploitive of a student's trust, or any combination of the foregoing.

To be specific, we commit ourselves:

a. to use our power and authority as teachers to serve the interests of the sangha;

b. to recognize the sangha as the highest authority in its own governance and to exercise discretion in our leadership so that we do not unduly influence decisions;

c. to treat sangha members, including fellow teachers, with honesty and deep respect, not subjecting them to disparagement, coercive pressure, or undesired attention of any kind;

d. to maintain confidences received from students, except as required by law or as explicitly permitted within the sangha;

e. to practice openness and inclusivity in our relationships with sangha members, allowing personal affinities a natural place but avoiding destructive favoritism;

f. to refrain from sexual interaction with members of the sangha, except within the parameters of a committed relationship and, even then, only with the utmost care to ensure that no one is harmed;

g. not to confer teaching authority, and especially Dharma transmission, on our lovers, spouses, siblings, children, employers, or known benefactors, nor to offer such authority as a means to attract, retain, or induce the cooperation of a student;

h. to accept economic support (dana) from individual sangha members only when it is freely given, never making it a direct requirement for instruction or attention; and

i. to join with the sangha in practicing careful stewardship of its resources, not to enrich ourselves by misappropriation of sangha funds or properties.

We ask our fellow Diamond Sangha teachers and the sanghas that we serve to hold us accountable to these standards.

♦

Participants from the SZC who were in the DSTC process that produced the Ethics guidelines and this following open letter have expressed that it involved long, painful, arduous, and scrupulous discussions. May their work bear the fruit of harmony for all.

Chris McLean,  
Newsletter Ed.

♦

**DIAMOND SANGHA  
TEACHERS CIRCLE OPEN  
LETTER TO JOHN  
TARRANT**

December 16, 1999  
Dear John,

We are writing out of our various relationships with you - one of us as the master who gave you authorization to teach the Dharma, a couple of us as your students, many of us as longtime friends, all of us as fellow practitioners and colleagues in the lineage of the Diamond Sangha.

Though you and your community recently chose to separate yourselves from the Diamond Sangha, we remain irrevocably linked by our Dharma heritage, common history, and very deep personal ties.

We find ourselves in an extraordinary dilemma. Over the past three years, we have received from aggrieved members of your sangha numerous, unsolicited complaints of misconduct on your part. We have received all these complaints with heavy hearts and have been hesitant to act on them, recognizing that there are always two sides to a story and not wanting to intervene in private matters. For that reason, we have repeatedly urged people to take their concerns up with you directly and have urged California Diamond Sangha (CDS) to institute an ethics code and grievance process and, when it did, have urged aggrieved parties to use it.

During this period, many of us also have reached out to you by letter, by phone, and in person to raise these concerns and to ask you to give us an accounting that would show either that the complaints themselves were unfounded or that you and CDS had answered them with appropriate remedies. Several of us have received your private acknowledgment that there is substance to at least some of the complaints and that you feel remorse for some of your actions. Others of us have been rebuffed, criticized, or ignored.

At this point, we have seen and heard enough to know that you stand accused of

serious, persistent abuses of power and boundary violations by a significant number of former officers and members of CDS, many of whom regarded themselves earlier as dear friends of yours. This is not simply an in-house problem, for these folks have reported their experiences and expressed their feelings not only to us but also to others in the Mahasangha; we have recently received letters from highly respected members of the North American sangha asking us to take resolute action.

Clearly this is no longer, if ever it was, a problem that can be contained within CDS itself, and for this reason, we now take the painful, long-delayed step of making our concerns public. Many of us feel we have waited far too patiently already, giving too much heed to your needs, too little heed to the needs of those who have left CDS bitter and agonized, in some cases emotionally or psychologically devastated.

We understand that you have, in recent years, changed your conduct in significant ways and that, even more recently, you have made an attempt at reconciliation with some people. We are heartened by this news and urge you to continue and deepen this process.

In particular, we ask that you commit yourself genuinely and publicly to a concerted process that would entail hearing the pain of alienated friends and students fully and deeply, endeavoring to understand their experience, examining how your words or actions might have caused or occasioned their suffering,

and - where warranted and desired - embarking with them on a course of restorative justice. For you personally, it would also entail seeking to identify and acknowledge any repeated patterns that you may find and making definite, visible steps to alter any such patterns. Consider taking time off from your teaching, if necessary, to achieve this goal and to renew your own spirits.

If this comes to pass, it will show in your actions and public pronouncements. You will be building yourself a new history, in which the present difficulties could be seen as part of your life journey, a hard passage en route to honor and fulfillment. Such a process of openness, confession, and taking responsibility for one's deeds is the ancient way of virtue found, in various forms, in every religion and traditional culture. If you take this path and really follow through, you will be a teacher and model for many others who have erred along the Way and for the many who wonder how a good person - such a brilliant, insightful, loving, creative, and generous person - could make errors of this nature.

We submit this letter to you not as judges or superiors but as your peers, who feel the great stress you must be under and are concerned for your well-being now and in the long term. At the same time, we cannot in good conscience go on without voicing our deep concern for the anguish others have suffered and continue to suffer to this

day. We urge you to take clearly visible steps to deal with the backlog of grief former students and also colleagues feel, so that all involved can be released from pain.

With gassho,

Robert Aitken  
Augusto Alcalde  
Subhana Barzaghi  
Gillian Coote  
Jack Duffy  
Nelson Foster  
Pat Hawk  
Danan Henry  
Michael Kieran  
Leonard Marcel  
Marian Morgan

## SZC News

**Autumn Sesshin.** The final dates for the Autumn session are: Easter Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> April to 28<sup>th</sup> April. (7day, Easter)

### Vipassana Retreat

Subhana will co-teach a Vipassana retreat with Christopher Titmuss March 25<sup>th</sup> to 2nd April. Contact Victor Heyde for details: (07) 3343 8243 or e-mail: vheyde@bit.net.au

### Stillness & Social Action Retreats

With Bobbi Allen, Simon Clough, & Subhana.  
Sydney: Nov 24<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> @  
Wat Buddha Dharma, and  
Melb: April 14<sup>th</sup> - 19.  
Contact Bobbi: 02 6688 6147

### Kids & Parents Retreat

The 2/3-day Kids & Parents retreat has been postponed, awaiting the formation of the 'Event's Working Group'. Hopefully it will be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year.

## Regular Events These Months

### February Women's Group

February 11  
7.30, Helen's Place,  
27 Regents St, Summer Hill  
Participants please let Helen know on 9798 9856 if you can't come.

### Board Meeting

February 15  
7:00, Annandale Zendo  
For more information call Chris 9960 6919.

### Zazenkai

February 20  
8:30-12:00, Annandale Zendo  
Dharma Talk at 10:00 - Subhana

### Full Moon Ceremonies

February 21 & March 22  
7:00, Annandale Zendo

### Samu at Gorricks

February 26/27  
Call Tony 9817 3466

### March Women's Group

March 10th  
7.30, Diana's Place,  
107 Bee Farm Road,  
Springwood  
Participants please let Diana know on 02 4751 3935 if you can't come.

### Zazenkai

March 19  
8:30-12:00, Annandale Zendo  
Dharma Talk at 10:00 - Gilly

### Board Meeting

Tuesday March 21  
7:00, Annandale Zendo  
For more information call Chris 9960 6919.

### Samu at Gorricks

March 25/26  
Call Tony 9817 3466

### Dharma Talks

Feb Zazenkai: Subhana

Mar Zazenkai: Gilly

### Dokusan

Starts again Monday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb and goes for the three Mondays after that. (See the calendar).

### One Continuous Mistake calligraphy practice group

will resume after the zazenkai on Sunday February 20, 2000. This is ongoing, for one and half hours after zazenkai each month, and all are welcome.

### Zazenkai

Dates: February 20 & March 19. There will be Dharma talks at 10:00 a.m..

### Samu at Gorricks

Samu Dates February 26/27 & March 25/26. Call Tony on 9817 3466. All help welcome.

### Awakening to the Dream

Susan Murphy and Subhana will present a workshop at the Buddhist Library - "Awakening to the Dream" - on dreams and creative processes in the life of Zen. **Sunday March 12.** Contact Susan: 9427 6097

### Recovery Workshop

*The Ground of Wellbeing:* a seminar on meditation and recovery, will be held on Sunday February 20, at the Buddhist Library from 9 - 5, with Paul Kapp, David Rowley, Larry Agriesti, Liz Turnbull, John Barter and Gilly Coote. Enquiries to Pip Atkins: 99550460

### Annandale Residence

There may be a vacancy for a resident at the Annandale zendo. Contact: John Perrin: 0412 114 861

### New from the Boardroom: SZC Working Groups

The SZC Board has been putting its collective mind to the matter of facilitating the growth and dynamism of the community, and in keeping with our goal of involving more people in a community-wide co-operative effort - encouraging members to take an active role in the day-to-day life of the SZC - we are currently working on the development of SZC Working Groups. (In the past newsletters I called these groups committees. They are now being called Working Groups.) The board is in the process of determining the nature, the powers, and other matters relating to their functioning. What I write here is necessarily sketchy because the process of design is only just under way.

Remember that in previous newsletters I foreshadowed I reprinted the group structure in the December newsletter, with the Chair's report, and it had previously been printed in the September newsletter. You might want to consider which of those groups that you could join, and let the appropriate contact person on the board know. (See below). There should be enough groups to cover all the areas of SZC's activities. A single member can be in a number of groups. It is hoped that the groups will be able to implement SZC policies and have some capacity to advise the board in their area of responsibility. We want to have one member of the board on each group to feed back to the board, but that board member won't necessarily be the convenor, or chair, of the group.

(In the case of the Chair of the SZC, he/she doesn't function as a delegated functionary or as the board's conduit in the groups at all. Also the Practice & Teaching group may have different guidelines to the others in its functioning, because that group, which will include the Practice Leaders, will be the Spiritual Director's responsibility.) The Board's contact people for the groups are as follows:

1) Resource Maintenance (two areas: Gorricks and Annandale):  
Brendon Stewart, 9879 7290 ~ Br.Stewart@uws.edu.au

2) Information, including *Mind Moon Circle* & the Newsletter:  
Richard Sandilands, 9130 1405 ~ richard999@ozemail.com.au

3) Retreats and Events (including Childcare):  
Jean Brick, 9560 3632 ~ jbrick@laurel.ocs.mq.edu.au

4) Financial Management:  
John Merson 9566 4965 ~ jmerson@ozemail.com.au  
(the treasurer is also in the group, but is not to be a functionary in it).

5) Sangha Relations: Pip Atkins, 9955 0460 ~ pippaa@ozemail.com.au

6) Teaching and Practice: Subhana

The board always retains its overall statutory function, and its public liability; furthermore, it will continue to have the role of Strategic Planning for the SZC. Under this structure it will be also the co-ordinator of the groups efforts.

Whatever I've said here about the groups is at this stage only a starting place for discussion, and based on my personal understanding of how it's evolving, because - as I said - the details have yet to be put into place. We're working on it, and will want to develop the project to an extent with the members of the groups. I've shared these rough ideas just so you can contact the Board's liaison person, and let them know you're interested. To remind yourself of the functions of each group (which are still being collected, and rationalised), see either your September or December Newsletter.

Christopher McLean, Chair

# SZC Calendar- February/March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January 30	31	February 1	2	3	4	5
	Zazen 7-9pm		Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Zazen 7-9pm		Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm	<b>Women's Group @ Helen's</b>	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	Zazen 7-9pm	<b>Board Meeting 7:00 Zendo</b>	Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
<b>Zazenkai 8:30-12:00 DharmaTalk 10:00 Calligraphy 1-2:30</b>	<b>Full Moon Ceremony &amp; Zazen 7-9pm</b>		Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm		<b>Samu Weekend @ Gorricks</b>
27	28	29	March 1	2	3	4
<b>Samu Weekend @ Gorricks</b>	<b>Dokusan  Zazen 7-9pm</b>					
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	<b>Dokusan  Zazen 7-9pm</b>		Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm	<b>Women's Group @ Diana's</b>	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	<b>Dokusan  Zazen 7-9pm</b>		Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
<b>Zazenkai 8:30-12:00 DharmaTalk 10:00 Calligraphy 1-2:30</b>	<b>Dokusan  Zazen 7-9pm</b>	<b>Board Meeting 7:00 Zendo</b>	<b>Full Moon Ceremony  Zazen 7-9pm</b>	Zazen 7-9pm		<b>Samu Weekend @ Gorricks</b>
25	27	28	29	30	31	April 1
<b>Samu Weekend @ Gorricks</b>	Zazen 7-9pm		Zazen 7-9pm	Zazen 7-9pm		