Most people who live in the Australian bush, or rural areas like Gidgegannup, where Dhammasara Monastery is located, are acutely aware of the possibility of bushfire and the implications of daily fire danger ratings. These ratings are announced on all weather forecasts (radio, TV and web) during the fire season and, along with the Bushfire Alert system, are monitored regularly by the Fire Wardens at Dhammasara. The ratings can vary from LOW through HIGH to CATASTROPHIC depending on temperature, humidity and wind speed, direction and variability. The ratings indicate the bushfire risk for the day.

If you are one of our supporters you probably live in the city or suburbs of Perth and may not be aware of fire danger ratings and their implications. For your own safety, comfort and convenience it is very helpful to know something about how the fire danger rating system works and how we are planning for fire safety at Dhammasara Monastery. Before visiting the monastery during the fire season it is important to check the forecast fire danger rating on the weather news the night before you plan to go, especially in very hot weather.

A New Bushfire Plan In October last year the Dhammasara “Triple A” Fire Team of Venerables Anālayā, Acalā and Aññā was formed to write and implement a Bushfire Emergency Plan and Bushfire Season Preparation Guidelines for Dhammasara. After a huge amount of research and consultation with local fire people, Ajahn Brahm and community members, the plan was written and extensive preparations made. During the fire season between 1 November and 31 April the bushfire plans specify in detail various bushfire safety measures that we need to observe. Some of these safety measures relate also to monastery visitors. The most important of these are that no incense or candles may be lit outdoors anywhere at any time, and simple directions must be followed relating to visitors parking and vehicle movements. Details can be found on the Dhammasara website www.dhammasara.org.au. It would be useful to familiarise yourself with these before visiting the monastery.

Dangerous Fire Days On SEVERE fire danger days we ask that people leave the monastery immediately after dāna and that they do not visit the public areas. On EXTREME fire danger days, which thankfully don’t happen very often, our bushfire plan requires that we close the monastery for the safety of our visitors, and prepare for the possibility of bushfire. Our survival strategy in the event of an actual fire in the area is to all leave the monastery early rather than stay and defend. Therefore the whole community needs to be prepared to evacuate the monastery at a moment's notice in EXTREME fire danger.

We will automatically evacuate Dhammasara if CATASTROPHIC fire danger is declared for the Perth Hills.

As mentioned above, the fire danger ratings for Perth Coastal Plain and Perth Hills are announced on weather reports on radio and TV. They can also be checked on:


where they are updated twice a day.

Check


for information on the Fire danger Ratings system.

A Timely Evacuation Drill 11 January 2014 was a very hot day by any reckoning. The temperature was nudging 44°C and there was a SEVERE fire danger warning and a Total Fire Ban declared in the Perth Hills that included a ban on driving vehicles through the bush. So, for the second time this year our Bushfire Safety measures at Dhammasara were ramped up one notch. After an extremely hot night, Sunday 12 January was our first EXTREME fire danger day for the year. With temperatures forecast in the low forties, the “Triple A” fire team swung into action. It is easy to inform all of the nuns about what we need to do and to prepare for possible bushfire but it is virtually impossible to forewarn supporters who might decide to bring dāna on an EXTREME day. All of the nuns brought their Overnight Evacuation Kits to the house and we made the other preparations necessary in EXTREME conditions. Several small groups of supporters and one large family group of intrepid visitors
braved the extreme heat to bring our dāna. Unfortunately they had to leave after a brief anumodana as soon as they dropped off the food. Our hearts went out to them that they couldn’t participate in the usual sharing that they had been anticipating.

As we ate our meal, unknown to us, a fire started in Parkerville less than 9km away. One hour later, after most people had gone back to their kutis, we got word of the fire, through the DFES online alert system, which was spreading rapidly and out of control. Given the EXTREME conditions and the proximity of the fire, which was by then in Stoneville and only 7km away, the fire warden decided to sound the alarm to bring everybody back to the house. While the “Triple A” team monitored the situation, within an hour the electricity failed and then the phone line. Mobile coverage at the house is erratic at best. However, we were still able to get regular updates on the fire from the ABC emergency reports on local radio and web updates from DFES (Dept Fire & Emergency Services). Despite no analogue phone coverage the data connection was still working.

Our Co-Abbots were at a BSWA committee meeting at Dhammaloka, blissfully unaware of the drama unfolding in the hills. Venerable Ānā had to go up to the gate 1.2km from the house to get a mobile signal to ring Venerable Hasapañña and let her know the situation. The view from the gate enabled her to see the huge billows of dark smoke that occupied half of the sky to the south of Dhammasara. It was a sobering sight and sadly represented many people’s homes that were at that moment being consumed by the wildfire sweeping through Stoneville and Parkerville.

A cooler westerly wind change had come through, the temperature was dropping rapidly and conditions were forecast to continue to MODERATE. It seemed unlikely that we would need to leave. While an emergency was happening just to the south, West Gidgegannup seemed safe. The co-Abbots arrived back later in the afternoon and soon after DFES issued a Watch and Act alert for West Gidgegannup. This is the second highest alert level and recommends that people leave their property unless they are prepared to stay and defend it. Because our strategy is to leave early, this advice was the trigger to evacuate the monastery. This decision was reinforced by the fact that the majority of the nuns were recovering from a bad flu and chest infections that would be exacerbated by the presence of smoke.

It was a tremendous opportunity to have a real, live emergency evacuation drill. The fire plan called for a full scale drill but we hadn’t got around to it yet. No time ever seemed to be quite suitable. There is nothing like a real emergency to change priorities about what is important! There was a long list of things that needed to be done to get us ready to leave and to make the building as secure as possible from fire. Everyone worked very hard to get everything done. All flammable things were cleared from the verandahs, and stowed, and shutters taken down. The dog and cat were not forgotten, vehicles were prepared and overnight and evacuation kits stowed in the bus and two vehicles. Everyone had a job and everything was accomplished quickly, quietly and mindfully with no fuss or panic. The whole process took less than twenty minutes. It was an almost perfect evacuation drill. We gave ourselves a big pat on the back as we left.

We drove in convoy to Dhammaloka and half the nuns stayed there while the rest of them were taken by family members and supporters to other overnight accommodation. The Dhammasara Community is EXTREMELY grateful to Lynn and Christina, Bryn and Ajahn Brahmm for helping to prepare for us at Dhammaloka and for Mahinda and Indrani Wijeratna, Ramani Gunasekera, Dulmanthi Sangakkara, Shammi Yatawara and Wicky Wickramarantha for their kindness and care. We had dāna at Dhammaloka on Monday before returning to Dhammasara and were once again overwhelmed by the kindness and support of so many people who came along to offer food.

We returned to Gidgegannup only 20 hours after we left and enjoyed a cool, breezy week without even a hint of smoke, much less fire thank goodness.
Peaceful wisdom practice is changeable by nature at Armadale

By Rachel Green
Co-ordinator Armadale Meditation group.

The Armadale group is buzzing with activity but also extending their meditation practices really well. Most of the group have bought a copy of Ajahn Brahm's book: "Good, Bad, Who knows?" and, in fact, it was so popular we had to have two book launches just to cope with the demand!

"Father Christmas" and his two helpers arrived before Christmas, each with a "sack" containing presents – books of Ajahn Chah’s, copies of a meditation CD set or chocolates. Everyone in the group, even those who had only come for the first time that night, received a present, as we want all people to feel personally included in the group. It is so easy for people to feel awkward because they don’t know anyone, but we are determined to break through such barriers and help everyone feel they belong.

The group was closed for two nights over Xmas but 6 members of the group went to Bodhinyana monastery on Christmas day and 9 attend Dhammaloka for Ajahn Brahm's New Year's eve party. These people had not done either before. Another first!

The true value of the group is due to the wonderful teachings we get each week from the monks at Bodhinyana monastery. We have a different teacher each week and a great variety – this means we are introduced to many ways of meditating, and are invited to contemplate many different perspectives. What a gift this is to the people of Armadale and surrounding areas.

When I went to see my sister in England, I decided to attend a Buddhist meditation group each week. When I finally found one I discovered it was run by lay people and with lay teachers. When I asked about the possibility of seeing a monk or nun, they said, "Oh yes, we see one each year when we travel on a pilgrimage." It is too easy to take what we have in Armadale and Nollamara for granted.

Recently we had a very vibrant and fascinating session conducted by one of our regular teachers, Ajahn Api. He called meditation, "Peaceful wisdom practice" and he explained that meditation helps us to develop greater tolerance for stress. He encouraged us to focus on the concept that all things are changeable by nature, a theme he has introduced to us before. However, this time the focus was upon the senses and we were encouraged to silently think one of the following on each out-breath …

taste is changeable by nature, sight is changeable by nature, sound is changeable by nature, touch is changeable by nature and smell is changeable by nature.

Here is one full sequence:

Breathing in – notice the space at the end of the in breath – as you are breathing out think "sight" - notice the space at the end of the out breath - breathing in – notice the space at the end of the in breath - as you are breathing out think "is changeable by nature" - notice the space at the end of the out breath.

Try it – it is fascinating. Ajahn Api says it can take us to a very deep place within our minds.

Ajahn Api explained that meditation involves drawing the attention inwards and that when we keep the mind in then we can drop down into deep tranquility. "You may find a pull of energy to a particular sense, e.g. sound, sight, touch, taste or smell and you may naturally go out to a sense, but then the mind will come back in", he said.

He said that disengagement or detachment occurs in the silence of the space and that when we sink into silent disengagement the mind becomes incredibly peaceful. Also, that when we draw our attention to the space and the silence then it will increase.

I am certainly going to practice focusing on the space and the changeability factor of life. Thank you so much Ajahn Api and to all the monks who teach us. You are shining lights in our lives.

Our next big step in the group is to encourage, en masse, members of the group to attend their first ever meditation retreat. (Watch out Jhana Grove!) It is a big leap for many in the group. Along with all the practical problems for people of finding the time and opportunity to be away from children (we have several single parents in the group or those with children with a disability), jobs or home, there is also the daunting aspect that most have never meditated for more than 30 minutes before. And, as one of the men in the group said last week, as he contemplated the prospect of attending, "I don't know which is going to be worse giving up smoking for the whole time or not talking for that length of time!" We will let you know how we all go!

A text messaging and email service has been established for anyone in the group who wants news and updates on group activities. Thanks to Marlene Gerritsen for running this. People are notified each week of the monk that is teaching and reminders are sent of group activities. It is a fast and efficient way to spread information and is working very well.

We meet at the Community Health Centre in the grounds of the Armadale Hospital Health Campus; you are welcome to join us at 7pm on any Tuesday evening. There will be someone on the door to personally welcome you. Please come a few minutes early as we can be bulging at the seams some nights and the doors are locked once we are full. If you need any more details please contact me on armadale@bswa.org or go to our page on the website: http://www.dhammaloka.org.au/armadale-group.html
When she left her career as a medical doctor, Sister Dang Nghiem, MD, a Zen Buddhist nun and disciple of Thich Nhat Hanh, learned the true meaning of healing.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor of a meditation room at Blue Cliff Monastery in New York State, Sister Dang Nghiem, 45, has the enviable air of a person who can (and does) sit still for hours on end without fidgeting. It’s not just because she wears the obvious markers of a monastic Buddhist life—the shorn hair, the brown robes. It’s that Sister D has a kind of radiant inner calm that you can only imagine she was born with. Except she wasn’t.

Fourteen years ago, Sister D barely even meditated. She answered to the name Huynh Thi Ngoc Huong and was a family physician who lived with her partner, John, in San Francisco. She’d known since she was a little girl that she wanted to dedicate her life to helping others. So after emigrating from Vietnam to the United States when she was 16, and then graduating from the University of California, San Francisco, Medical School, she seemed, on the face of things, to have it all: a best friend and lover in John; a prestigious job. It was a long, long way from where she’d come.

She was born in 1968 in Central Vietnam during the height of the war to a Vietnamese woman who was in and out of her life. She never knew who her father was but was told he was a US soldier. For much of her childhood, Sister D had to fend for herself, facing verbal, physical, and sexual abuse from relatives, though she took solace in her grandmother, whom she adored.

Her grandmother wanted Sister D and her younger brother to be the first in their family to go to college, and in 1985—because of a stipulation in the Amerasian Immigration Act allowing children of US and Vietnamese citizens to apply for American citizenship—she moved the children into foster care in the United States. By the time Sister D started medical school, she and her brother had been shuffled through five different foster homes.

In September 1999, Sister D was officially an MD. The circumstances of her life bore no resemblance to those of her troubled youth, but the feelings, the depression she’d struggled with since childhood, still dogged her. She’d been pushing John away, steeling herself from him when the sadness hit, which was often. Just before her 31st birthday, John suggested they take a trip to the coast to celebrate. She told him she wanted to be alone, so he took the trip solo. A couple of days later, on the morning of her birthday, Sister D was on call at the hospital when she got word that John had drowned. That was her last day as a doctor.

The pain of John’s sudden death was unbearable, and it forced her to look inward. “When the healer is not healed,” Sister D says now, “when she is wounded herself, she cannot really care for others.”

If she was going to be able to help other people, she thought, first she would have to face her own difficult past: “All my life I thought that if I became very successful, if I found a loving partner, then that would make up for everything I lost or never had as a child. But I wasn’t happy, because I didn’t know how to handle my past.”

Just weeks before John’s death, Sister D had attended a 5-day mindfulness retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh, a well-known and respected Zen master. In her memoir, Sister D recounts how John first introduced her to the concept of mindfulness—of living in the present moment through meditation and by focusing on the breath. She’d absorbed some of that by being around John, but after this immersion with Nhat Hanh, something shifted inside her. “It showed me that there are concrete practices,” she says. “There is a path, there is a way of life that I can practice, and it can help heal me.” So while she would not return to her job as a doctor, she decided to focus, at least for a little while, on healing herself and others by learning and teaching mindfulness. She packed up her life and moved to Nhat Hanh’s Plum Village monastery in Southern France.

That was 14 years ago. She now resides at Blue Cliff, another of the Zen master’s centers. “I stopped being a doctor, but I continue to be a physician—I just don’t prescribe drugs,” she says. “And to anyone who comes to me, I transmit my whole energy of mindfulness. Now the healer, the healed, and the healing process are not three separate entities.”
Here's what else she knows now.

**Breathing heals; time doesn’t.**

It’s a myth to say that time can heal. Time cannot heal. Breathing and mindfulness can. [Long after a traumatic event happens to you,] a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch can trigger the complete stress response as though it’s happening all over again. What saved me was the mindfulness of breathing. Sometimes I would lie down to breathe and put my hands on my belly to slow it down and anchor my body. Through breathing, you learn to slow the stress response, the fight-flight-or-freeze response. If you can do that when going through a very intense experience, the next time you recall that trauma, you will do so with more peace, mindfulness, and clarity.

**You can cultivate joy even when you’re hurting.**

It’s been 14 years since John died. I still miss him every day, but I have learned to cultivate joy and peace in each breath, even though I feel that pain. You have to do them both at the same time. It’s like a garden: You have to take care of the weeds, but you also have to plant flowers. If you only weed, you’ll be exhausted and lose hope. And if you plant enough flowers, eventually there will be less room for all the weeds. (Get more ideas on how to find joy everyday.)

"Applied Buddhism" means mindfulness happens all day.

We’re not saying you have to set out 1 hour a day to sit on a cushion. We’re not saying quit your job and go live in the mountains. We’re just saying if you eat, don’t eat your projects. Don’t eat your sadness. Don’t eat the argument you just had. Just eat. If you walk, just walk. If you drive, drive. We have to choose again and again to be in the present moment. The moment you realize you are not being mindful, that’s the moment you are mindful. And you come back to it again and again. It’s a mental training.

**You can keep the dead alive.**

When a person dies and you lose all your joy, then it is like you are making sure that person is as dead as possible. But you can learn to call on the spirit of that person for help and learn to see him or her around you. When I see a purple flower, I remember that John loved purple flowers, and I smile. That flower, in that moment, becomes him.

**Mindfulness is powerful medicine.**

Mindfulness is the most effective preventive medicine there is, because it teaches you to care for yourself. Because you learn not to cause harm to yourself or others, physically, mentally, psychologically. I learned in medicine that so many of our illnesses are from lifestyle, and the biggest factor of our lifestyle is stress. Stress will bring on any illness. Diabetes runs in my family. My mother had it; my uncle had it. My brother, who is 4 years younger than I am, developed it in his mid-30s. I’m in my mid-40s now and I still don’t have it. We can have a genetic predisposition, but our lifestyle can determine when an illness will manifest, if it will ever manifest.

**Kind actions matter.**

In the Buddhist teaching, we talk about karma. Karma means actions, thoughts, speech. So really everything we do in life matters. You think, Oh, it doesn’t mean anything to bend down and pick up a nickel and give it to the person who dropped it. You think, Oh, it doesn’t mean anything to open the door for somebody. But you know what? Everything you do means everything. Every word you say to somebody or to yourself accumulates. Mindfulness allows us to make [more thoughtful choices in the moment]. And so we are more likely to have more positive and wholesome seeds in us to save us in daily life and very difficult moments.

**Real medicine means being present.**

If a doctor learns to practice mindfulness, if she learns to do a walking meditation as she’s going to the patient’s room—gathering herself, truly present—and she walks in quietly, peacefully, that’s already medicine. She’s calm. She’s not outside of her own body. The patient feels that attention, that tenderness, that care, that true presence. The patient is already soothed.

Thank you to ‘Prevention’ magazine for sharing this article which was written by Siobhan O’Connor, published December 2013, Prevention.

The first time I saw Venerable Candā, visiting Bodhinyāna in 2013, she looked content and incredibly happy. I thought to myself, ‘I want some of that’. So I stalked her for an interview and she obliged. A week later I drove to Bodhinyāna and interviewed her.

Ven. Candā was born in Chesterfield, England, where she grew up happily, with her parents and younger sister. She was an analytical child who asked endless ‘why’ questions but was never satisfied with the explanations. At age fifteen Candā experienced a strong sense of urgency to find meaning in life. She described it as if a big black cloud came over her and she was carrying the suffering of the whole world. It didn’t make sense - she had a loving family, nice house and did well at school - and it left her feeling guilty. This made the situation worse because, although she was surrounded by love, no one seemed to understand or empathise and she felt very alone.

Her conclusion was that suffering doesn’t depend on externals. This raised serious questions - if this is as good as it gets in the world, why seek happiness there? Candā sensed something more, and this led her to explore. It started with rebelling - she sang in a rock band rather than conforming to others' expectations and - she was interested in the changing nature of bodily sensations and mental contents. Although sitting still for hours can be challenging, one has to be sensible and move when necessary.

The initial shock wore off when Candā arrived in the Himalayas. She noticed that despite the poverty, people seemed to radiate joy and humility, as if connected to something beyond their own concerns. She had never seen this in England, and sensed that India had much to teach. It soon became her spiritual home.

Despite living in spectacularly beautiful parts of Asia and meeting many amazing people, Ven Candā was still searching when she heard about S. N. Goenka meditation retreats. The prospect of being alone with her mind intrigued her and on her first retreat in 1996 she found what she was looking for. What a relief to find that someone - the Buddha – had stated the truth that life is suffering and had also shown the way out! Candā vowed to herself never to lose this path. While there was no major ‘breakthrough’ on the retreat, she saw that suffering is inherent in the five senses and afterwards found the five precepts came quite naturally. She devoted the next seven years to integrating a daily meditation practice with serving on retreats in India and Nepal, working to fund travel. She derived much joy from seeing others benefit, which boosted her own practice.

In 1994, at nineteen, Candā and her best friend set off with $300 and a one-way ticket to India. Arriving in the dirty back lanes of Delhi was a shock - there were no women or other foreigners around, and people were staring! Her friend dashed straight to the squat loo and threw up!

Four years into her austere lifestyle in Burma, Candā’s health was suffering badly and intensive practice was no longer suitable or helpful. She realised that a gentler, more sustainable approach would be necessary to stay on the middle path, as the body is our vehicle and must be treated with care.

Around this time, in January 2010 she came across Ajahn Brahm’s rains talks ‘by chance’, which she said went ‘straight to the heart’, especially his emphasis on right attitude and deepening stillness through contentment. She said Ajahn Brahm’s words, in her own language, were ‘like nectar, giving rise to heaps of joy’. Within three talks, on a leap of faith, she took leave of her teacher and set out to find Ajahn Brahm.
Dhammasara Monastery was full. She joined Ajahn Brahm's retreat in Germany, and fortunately secured a place in the 2012 Vassa at Bodhinyāna. In the meantime she lived as a wandering nun and was grateful for the support from Amaravati and Chithurst monasteries in England.

She described her stay at Bodhinyāna as transformative in a 'totally safe, accepting and kind' atmosphere. Afterwards she went to Santi Monastery in NSW and took samaneri ordination. In May 2013 she joined the community at Dhammasara. Ven. Candā was touched by their warm welcome and kindness. She feels her growth now lies in integrating meditation with service to this community. Communal living can help dissolve the ego as one's wishes have to yield to those of the group. She believes renunciation is vital to the path and would like to see monastic life become more accessible, allowing many more to live the Dhamma-Vinaya.

Ven. Candā's advice to meditators is simply to 'cultivate contentment in each moment and allow the process to naturally unfold. Be gentle, be patient and try not to measure or judge. Freedom lies not in the object of experience, but in our relationship to it. Accepting and embracing suffering as well as happiness, with gratitude, develops compassion, wisdom and peace.'

Ven. Candā feels privileged to live in a harmonious community of happy monastics, and is extremely grateful to have access to Noble teachings. Seeing the qualities of Dhamma embodied, she feels, brings joy and inspiration to the holy life, and makes Nibbāna seem like a genuine possibility.
I came across Buddhism in 1995 when my Mum had cancer. When she was sick, a monk called Venerable Tejadhammo would visit her at home and in the hospital. She would often talk happily about this monk who never asked for anything back in return. He helped her through many difficult times dealing with sickness and death. For the first time in my life, I witnessed compassion. I had to meet this monk and I wanted to know more about Buddhism. I met him on my Mum's funeral day, that was the first time I saw a Theravadan monk.

Ever since I came across meditation after meeting Ven Tejadhammo, there was a very strong pull towards wanting to know more about it. I used to ask Ajahn Kalyano quite often as to when he would run a 9 day retreat when he first arrived in Victoria, and attended many retreats with various teachers as well as going to Thailand to do long retreats. There are other reasons that made me look for answers in life too.

I witnessed the suffering that my mother had to go through due to stomach cancer. When I was working in a nursing home, I noticed how boredom from not having anything to do can cause a negative restless mind for some. I haven't forgotten the contorted expressions that were on the faces of the residents, and on my father's face too after he retired. I also noticed that everytime I don't feel happy, I would switch on the television or indulge in food. There must be a way out from all this suffering.

I learnt how to do breath meditation during my first 9 day retreat with Sister Thanasanti. On the third day, interestingly, I noticed that my restless mind started to settle down after some hardcore hourly alternate sitting and walking meditation sessions. I have to confess that I dreaded hearing the sound of the bell that wakes us up at 4:30am. Oh, how I wish I could have another 2 more hours of sleep. I love my beauty sleep and I found out, unfortunately, only after many hard years that when the mind is energised and if I have had good meditations, I would automatically wake up even before the bell rings.

In 2005, there was a lot of bullying at my place of work. Feelings of insecurity and wanting to control, I believe, are the reasons that create bullying. For weeks, I experienced a lot of tension and painful emotions. One day I got so fed up I decided to do nothing but meditate the whole morning before going to work. I must have done something correct in my meditation because when I was at my work place, I noticed that my mind was so still that it didn't react the usual way that it normally did. Man, that was good; none of the unpleasant feelings and tension came up at all. That experience strengthened my faith and increased a lot of motivation to practice. I thank all those who gave me a hard time.

During the last 12 years, three major challenges that I have are lust, unwholesome thoughts, and restlessness. Before I came across Ajahn Brahm, I used to fight and suppress these enemies during meditation. Little did I know that these are angry-eating demons that would grow into huge monsters if I did let them be. Even after listening to Ajahn Brahm's retreat talks, it took a lot of faith and courage to be still, let them be and not to interfere when they came to visit. The simile of The Thousand Petal Lotus that Ajahn Brahm talked about during his 2007 Easter Retreat is one of my favourite. It has helped me through many difficult times. Now, I learn to treat the wholesome and unwholesome mind states, as much as I know how, with the same kindness and acceptance. I know that I have no control over them so why get attached or fight them anyway during meditation.

It has not been easy to achieve some freedom and experience some causes for happiness. I had to give up a lot to get where I am in my practice today. 8 years ago, I decided to work part-time, to get just enough money to pay for bills so that I can have more time to practice. I lost a lot of friends because I wanted to lead a simple life and stay near the forest. It was lonely but I filled the days listening to dhamma talks and continued to overcome hindrances which were very important to me in this life. There were many times that I almost gave up but I always remembered two important things; 'yes, I can' and 'don't give up'. I look for ways to keep my head above water. The peace and happiness that comes from good meditation and making the precepts pure are worth pursuing. I use the calmness that I get to make good decisions, live with all sorts of people (including myself), to find my car keys when I can't remember where I have put them and to cope with difficult situations. Maybe one day, if I see the emptiness in the middle of the Lotus, I won't have to be reborn ever again.
Sala Complex Project

Ground breaking news

A 'ground breaking' ceremony was held on 21st November to officially kick off the beginning earthworks for the Sala Complex. All of the nuns gathered on the site to chant the Paritta, which is a protective chant. So far, we are in the process of putting in the retaining walls, sand pad, concrete footings and slabs, and digging the trenches for the electricity and water pipes. We have finalised the effluent disposal location for the biomax system (sewage) and submitted the drawings for the Hydraulic Schematic and Site/Roof Plan to the council for approval.

Are you a budding writer?

Have you got something to share with our Buddhist community? Or is there something you would like to read about?

We are always welcoming of new articles and stories, interesting photos and ideas.

If you would like to contribute please email your material or ideas to editor@bswa.org
This is a special edition of our magazine, since at last we are able to announce the commencement of works on the new buildings at Dhammasara Nuns’ Monastery, which we aim to have completed during this year. We have appreciated your support in this, and it has been awe inspiring to see the wonderful level of donations received so far that have enabled us to commence the work. We will be providing regular updates through the year, and we encourage members to visit Dhammasara from time to time to share in the joy of the work there.

This edition marks the end of my term as President and it has been a privilege to serve our Society over the past two years. But it is a very demanding role, and hard work, and I look forward to passing the baton to the next President! I had to stand down from the role some months early, under the weight of responsibilities at work and having to deal with what Ajahn Brahm would call “President suffering”! I have been grateful to Lynne for acting as President these last months and for the ongoing work of our dedicated committee. However, it turns out that I am also grateful for that suffering, as without it I would not have gone to Bali to do a personal growth course, and would not have spent the past two months in Bali relaxing and meditating and having the space to reconnect with my spiritual practice. Now that I am back in Perth, and having taken a period of retreat at Jhana Grove, I am grateful to be here again and part of our community.

Over the last couple of years, we have seen growth in our community at Dhammaloka. We have a wonderful warm and vibrant community here, and events continue through each weekend and into the week. Please come and join us in the many events that are put on, which will help you to feel part of our community. We undertook major building renovations, which are most visible in the fully refurbished Dana Hall. The jungle of growth in front of the hall has been replaced with a beautifully laid out garden, and our Bodhi Tree now has pride of place as the sacred heart of Dhammaloka. The little statue of the Buddha under the Bodhi Tree has become quite a focal point for our Thai community and it is wonderful to see the appreciation for the work done. We also extended the committee rooms in the main building. There was an enormous amount of work that had to be done on services, water, gas, sewer and electricity. All of these were at the end of their life span in one way or another, and we ended up doing almost complete replacements of these, which should see our premises good for another 20 years. A feature which everyone is grateful for, right now, is the addition of air-conditioning to our buildings, so now you have no excuse to avoid coming on a Friday night during summer!

One of the lessons that we learn in Buddhism is that everything that starts also finishes. This applies to the term of a president just as much as anything else and I have been grateful for the hundreds of members that I have come to know over the last couple of years. When I started, I made it a goal to try and attend everything that we organise, and to visit all of our monasteries and centres regularly. That proved to be one of the best things I have ever done, as I developed a deep appreciation for our Sangha and community. I encourage everyone to do the same, as a way of deepening our spiritual practice. There is no special merit in any role that we undertake for our Society. It runs on the combined efforts of hundreds of volunteers and we all take it in turns to carry these roles at various times. I have been grateful to work in with everyone these past two years and look forward to continuing to volunteer in support of our community. To Ajahn Brahm I say, thank you for letting me have the experience of this role.

May the blessings of the Triple Gem be in our community, Linda Phillips.
Become a member & support the Buddhist Society of WA

The Buddhist Society of Western Australia (BSWA) offers membership to anyone who wishes to support the Society's aims of encouraging the teaching, practice and realisation of Buddhist principles, and of helping to make available to the general public these teachings and practices.

As a member of BSWA you will receive:
- Our high quality 12 page quarterly newsletter, the Enlightened Times, by mail or email
- Local members: will be entitled to Borrowing rights for books and CDs from BSWA library's extensive Dhamma collection
- Full members will get Priority for places at BSWA's 9 Day Retreats at Jhana Grove Meditation Retreat Centre in Serpentine

- Good karma by supporting the BSWA, which provides Buddhist teachings free of charge locally and internationally via its acclaimed website and runs two monasteries, as well as a retreat centre.

Has Your Membership Lapsed

You will receive our Newsletter for 1 year after your membership has lapsed.

How Do I Apply?

A Membership form is required for all types of membership, including renewal. You can download it from http://www.bswa.org.au/membership.html

Email, fax or post the completed form to:
the BSWA at PO Box 3135, Yokine WA 6060, Australia.

In Person: Payment can be made in person to the BSWA at Dhammaloka Centre, 18-20 Nanson Way, Nollamara, WA 6061 by cash, cheque or credit card.

Online Payment: Online payment is available at http://www.dhammaloka.org.au/memberships.html

Direct Payment Bank Details:
BankWest, Davenport Street, Karrinyup WA 6018, Australia
BSB: 306 073, Account No.: 068 6932, Account Name: BSWA Vihara Expense
(For international payments SWIFT CODE = BKWAAU6P)
Add a remark (Full Name) m/ship or if you already have a membership number Number + Full Name

For any membership enquiries please contact the Assistant Secretary, BSWA asec@bswa.org
REGULAR ACTIVITIES
The centre is always open in the daytime between 9am-5pm for you to walk around the grounds and to use the shrine room on the right hand side of the Main Hall for meditation or contemplation.

MONDAYS
11:00am – 3:00pm - Open Day. A volunteer is available to show visitors around the centre
2:00pm – 3:00pm - Guided Meditation Classes are held in the room on the left hand side of the Main Hall
6:00pm – 7:00pm Yoga (Classes will be held at the Community Hall)

TUESDAYS
6:15pm – 7:15pm Yoga (Classes will be held at the Community Hall)

WEDNESDAYS
6:00pm – 7:00pm Yoga (Classes will be held at the Community Hall)

FRIDAYS
7:00pm – 7:20pm - Chanting
7:30pm – 8:00pm - Guided meditation by a senior monk or nun
8:00pm – 9:00pm Dhamma talk by a senior monk or nun

SATURDAYS
10:30am - Morning Chanting then Dana offering of food to the monks or nuns and a shared lunch for all in the Community Hall
3:00pm – 4:15pm - Ongoing Meditation Class with a senior monk or nun
3:00pm – 4:15pm - 4 week Beginners' Meditation Class that starts on the 1st Saturday of the month
5:00pm – 6:00pm - Kalyana Mitta discussion and meditation group 'A community of good friends'. The group meets in the room on the right hand side of the Main Hall. Email perthkalyanamitta@gmail.com for more information.

SUNDAYS
9:15am – 10:15am - Children's Dhamma class. Every Sunday 9am-10am (ages 6-17 years), and 10:15am-11am (ages 3-5 years). For new families, parents please contact Lee first, thank you.
10:30am - Morning Chanting then Dana offering of food to the monks or nuns then a shared lunch for all in the Community Hall.
3:00pm – 4:15pm - Sutta Class or Buddhist Study Group in the Main Hall every 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month
4:00pm – 5:00pm Yoga (Classes will be held at the Community Hall)

FULL MOON (POYA) DAY
A day for those who would like to undertake the 8 precepts. Please check the notice board for program and dates.

LIBRARY HOURS - OFFICE HOURS
Fri: 6:00pm - 7:30pm & 9:00pm – 9:30pm
Sat: 2:00pm – 3:00pm & 4:00pm – 5:00pm
Tue, Thur & Fri: 10:00am – 3:00pm

FOR INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING:
Activities at Dhammaloka, Tel: 9345 1711 www.dhammaloka.org.au
Children's Dhamma Class, Lee Chan at 9325 8238 (9am – 6pm)

Meditation Retreats at Jhana Grove Retreat Centre

NINE DAY RETREATS
17-26 April 2014 (Ajahn Brahm) Booking closed
21-30 November 2014 (Ajahn Brahm) Bookings: 29 Aug (Full Members) 5 Sept (Others)

WEEKEND RETREATS
28 Feb – 2 Mar 2014 (Ajahn Appicatto) Bookings (Wait list open)
23-25 May 2014 (Ajahn Sujato's Metta Retreat) Bookings 11 Apr 2014 (Open to All)

The activities are correct at time of printing. Please contact BSWA (info@bswa.org) to verify the times closer to the date.