

Spiritual Education Group - Sub-committee Report January to December 2022

2023 Committee Members include:

- Ajahn Brahmalī - Bodhinyana Representative and Line Manager (EXEC)
- Ajahn Hasapanna - Dhammasara Representative (EXEC)
- Sandra Henville - Chair and Lay Teacher Coordinator (EXEC) [and KFC Coordinator]
- Aurora Tait (*was Phuong Truong 2022*) - Secretary (EXEC) [and Be Quiet Coordinator]
- Phuong Truong (*was Veronica Darmali 2022*) - Outreach Coordinator

In addition, the following people provide valuable input:

- Ariel Hoyer (*was Anusha Yatawara 2022*)- Community Coordinator
- Dean Bunter (*was Andrew McDougal*) - Acacia Prison Liaison
- Sol Hanna - BAMBI Coordinator
- Shyama De Silva and Sachi Bandaranayake - Children's Dhamma School Coordinators
- Diana Lam - Children's Dhamma School Teacher Coordinator
- Peter Smith (*and Bianca DiBua*)- Introduction to Meditation Coordinator
- Marlene Gerritsen - Armadale Meditation Group Coordinator
- Veronica Darmali - Chaplaincy Program

The SEG was established to:

- create appropriate criteria for the accreditation of lay teachers of the BSWA
- promote the teaching and practice of the Buddhist Eightfold Path, with a focus on the development of kindness, generosity, morality, meditation, and wisdom
- oversee teaching-outreach programs
- expand the reach of the BSWA to areas within Western Australia that have not been well served by it in the past.

The emphasis of the SEG is training, accreditation, and oversight of experienced lay teachers, as well as developing courses and course materials to support lay teachers.

Since the last AGM report, the SEG has completed the accreditation of the vast majority of existing lay teachers, and has also been processing applications from prospective lay teachers. Part of this process has also involved working with the BSWA Administrative team to process Working with Children Checks for all relevant lay teachers, and providing information on the new Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse guidelines to all existing and prospective lay teachers.

Programs and highlights from 2022:

Dean and Andrew visited **Acacia Prison** to provide meditation classes every Sunday, with good support from the Coordinating Chaplain at Serco. Attendance was relatively low, but those that attended showed clear benefits. There are many restrictions on distributing books and other such material in prisons, due to security reasons, however, some books were able to be given to the prison Chaplain. Visits to the Bunbury prison had to cease due to volunteer commitments. A coordinator was being sought for providing services to women's prisons.

The **Armadale Meditation Group** met weekly via Zoom on Tuesday evenings with monks from Bodhinyana Monastery. During the Rains Retreat, they met with guest speakers from various parts of the world, with an average turnout of 25-30 participants.

On Tuesdays 5-6pm and Thursdays 12-2pm, the **Curtin Chaplaincy Program** volunteers facilitated a meditation at Curtin University. The number of attendees ranged from 4-8 people. This was the first ‘full swing’ outreach program, coordinated in 2022 by Veronica Darmali, who has since stepped down from the role of Outreach Coordinator. Veronica established this program and it has been settling and continuing to grow.

BAMBI has a regular program that spans across Margaret River, Nannup and Busselton. The regular program includes: 1st Sunday of each month in Margaret River; 2nd Sunday of each month in Nannup; 3rd Sunday of each month in Busselton. Venerable Kassapa was lead teacher for 6 months in 2022, with Sol being lead teacher the other months. The sessions involved a talk on Buddhist practice, a guided meditation, and Q&A. Audience sizes varied greatly but averaged around a dozen people. Simon Taylor also ran a weekly Sunday session in Nannup, which included guided meditation and watching a BSWA Dhamma talk.

The **Kalyana Friendship Community** (KFC) met on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month, for meditation and Dhamma discussions with one of the monastics. During the Rains Retreat, there were various guest speakers, including Insight Meditation Teacher Sky Dawson, Forest Therapist Belinda McCawley, and Tai Chi teacher Virginia Milner. Some food and music nights were organised with Eddie Khoo, and a movie screening of *Rapture* by Van Ly.

The **Be Quiet** youth group (18-35 year olds) held regular “Mindfulness Meet-ups” every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month, for a meditation and group discussion/Q&A with one of the monastics. During the Rains Retreat, the group met once a month with young adult guest speakers Konrad and Veronica. Social events were organised throughout the year, including a board games and pizza night; a yoga class; hikes followed by Dana at Bodhinyana and Kusala Hermitage; and busy bees at Dhammasara and Kusala. The Be Quiet “Being a Friend to Yourself” youth retreat with Ajahn Santutthi was held 2nd-4th December at Jhana Grove, with a very positive response from retreatants.

In 2022, the **Community Coordinator** organised the Friday Night Rains Retreat Speakers Series. There was much variety in speakers and events, from Imams to Astronomers, and music to movies. The intention behind the variety was to appeal to the greater community and showcase the Dhammaloka space and programs. Many people found it helpful and enjoyed the activities. A special thank you must go to the BSWA Audio Visual and Online Recording Teams who had to overcome many technical challenges.

Introduction to Meditation classes ran on the first 4 Saturdays of each month by now-accredited lay teachers. Though there was a reduction in the number of attendees compared to pre-COVID times, the numbers did seem to be increasing as the year progressed.

In May 2022, Diana was appointed Interim Manager of the **Children’s Dhamma School**, undergoing a transition process with Lee Chan. A Dhamma School Management Group was formed. The SEG convened a meeting with all Dhamma School teachers to revise the BSWA Dhamma School policy and approach. Sachi and Shyama have since taken on the role of Dhamma School Coordinators. The Dhamma School ran 3 Terms in 2022 on Sunday mornings, with 1 class for 3-5 year olds at 10:15am-11am, and 3 classes for 6-18 year olds at 9am-10am. The Children’s Dhamma School established a change from a fee for attendance to requirement that one parent/guardian has BSWA membership.

Reported by Aurora Tait (SEG Secretary), 7 March 2023