Spiritual Education Group - Sub-committee Report for BSWA AGM 2025

Reporting Period: January to December 2024

Reported by Aurora Tait January 2025

2024 Committee Members included:

- Ajahn Brahmali - Bodhinyana Representative and Line Manager
- Ajahn Hasapanna - Dhammasara Representative
- Sandra Henville - Chair and Lay Teacher Coordinator
- Aurora Tait - Secretary
- Phuong Truong - Outreach Coordinator

Lay Teacher Accreditation

The SEG continued to oversee the accreditation of prospective lay teachers. The SEG Subcommittee voted to reduce the number of 9-day retreats required for teacher accreditation to 1.

Programs and highlights from 2024

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR GROUP PROGRAMS

The **Be Quiet** youth group (18-35 year olds) held monthly 'Mindfulness Meet-ups' at Dhammaloka - including meditation and group discussion/Q&A with a monastic. The group consistently had about 10-12 attendees each month, including some new faces each time. During the Rains Retreat, these meet-ups were on hold, and instead the group held a community tai chi class in August and a group visit to Bodhinyana Monastery in September. The 'Kindful Drawing' activity organised for October was cancelled as Ruby, the organiser, was ill. Sessions with monastics resumed monthly after the Rains Retreat.

The all-ages **Kalyana Friendship Community** continued to meet on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month for their 'Chat to a Monastic' sessions, including chanting, meditation and Dhamma discussions. Sandra handed the group over to Reuben and Benz to coordinate. The group had 10-15 attendees per session. Reuben and Benz hosted a pot-luck dinner on 25th May after KFG in honour of National Volunteer Week, with about 16 people attending.

There was a good audience turnout for the 'Heavenly Messengers' **Rains Retreat Speakers Series** organised by Ariel. Most of these Friday night talks were uploaded to YouTube afterwards.

Ananda Thilakasiri organised weekly **Dhamma/Sutta discussion groups** again on alternate Sundays during the Rains Retreat. The group was once again well attended and appreciated.

LAY TEACHER COORDINATOR PROGRAMS

Monday Meditation: The SEG Subcommittee extend our deep gratitude to the late Jacob Meddin, who led the Monday meditation sessions at Dhammaloka, along with his many services to the BSWA. Since Jacob's passing, Geoff and Molly kindly volunteered to play recordings of Ajahn Brahm meditations each Monday. The session time changed to 1-2pm (rather than the previous 2-3pm) from 4th November, to make the session more accessible to people with children (given school pick-up time) and for those trying to avoid traffic on the way home.

Introduction to Meditation: The 4-week course each month continued to run as usual on Saturdays. The team welcomed two new accredited teachers to the roster.

The **Children's Dhamma School** ran 3 Terms in 2024 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 school had around 30 registered students. Debbie organised mural painting at Bodhinyana by the students, and, in cooperation with the monks, started the Bodhinyana toy exchange program. It was decided that the Dhamma School teacher accreditation requirements were too rigorous, and so it was agreed that Debbie will review the questionnaire and guidelines and make suggestions to the SEG to better meet the needs of the Dhamma School. The priority is to ensure there are enough volunteers who work well with children to support the Dhamma School. After receiving an enquiry from a grandparent, the Subcommittee voted that grandparent BSWA membership can also allow grandchildren to attend Dhamma School, in lieu of parent membership. Parent or grandparent membership is the requirement for Dhamma School attendance in lieu of a fee.

The **Armadale Meditation Group** met weekly via Zoom on Tuesday evenings, mainly with monks from Bodhinyana Monastery, with an average of about 50 participants a week, including many international attendees. The AMG Rains sessions had all female lay guest speakers. The number of attendees remained constant compared to before Rains, which is not usually the case. On 24 December 2024, the AMG had its first speaker from Dhammasara Nuns Monastery - Ajahn Munissara. For their annual collection for Starick House Women's Refuge, the group received 110 Coles/Myer gift vouchers from generous donors from the BSWA community.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR PROGRAMS

Curtin Meditation Program: The CBD program closed due to low numbers. At the main Curtin campus, sessions were held twice a week on Tuesdays & Wednesdays. Wednesdays 5pm were the most popular with 5-10 attendees. Given this, for 2025 the group will only run on Wednesdays 5pm, as Tuesdays aren't convenient for students & staff. During the Rains Retreat, Curtin Meditation dropped down to one day a week. The number of attendees was between 10-15 people.

Chaplaincy: Requests received by BSWA for Buddhist chaplains were directed to Sandra who communicated with the Buddhist Council of WA committee to organise appropriate monastic or lay chaplaincy support.

Prisons Program: Sandra submitted a response to the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services outlining the BSWA's involvement in delivery of faith services to prisons and indicated our desire to continue services. There was difficulty in obtaining clearances for volunteers, and given this Sandra found that the prisons program could not run sustainably. The program was put on hold. Dhamma books and CDs (which met the strict requirements for prison acceptance) were sent to Boronia women's prison, Bunbury prison, Acacia prison and Wooroloo Prison Farm. The SEG Subcommittee approved a small budget for books for prisons of $200/year.

BUSSELTON AUGUSTA-MARGARET RIVER BUDDHIST INITIATIVE (BAMBI)

Regular sessions included Wednesdays in Margaret River, and Sundays in Nannup and Busselton. BAMBI were fortunate to have visits from Ajahn Cunda and Ajahn Bodhidhaja in April, Venerable Sunyo and Venerable Mettaji in May, and Ajahn Hasapanna in November. The monastic visit in May included the first ever Vesak Day celebration held in Bunbury with thanks to the local Sri Lankan community, attended by over 100 people. Regular events had about a dozen attendees, but when monastics visited this increased to 20-30 attendees. Sol (Margaret River) and Adrian (Busselton) offered an Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy course on Monday evenings.