



# Atisha Centre



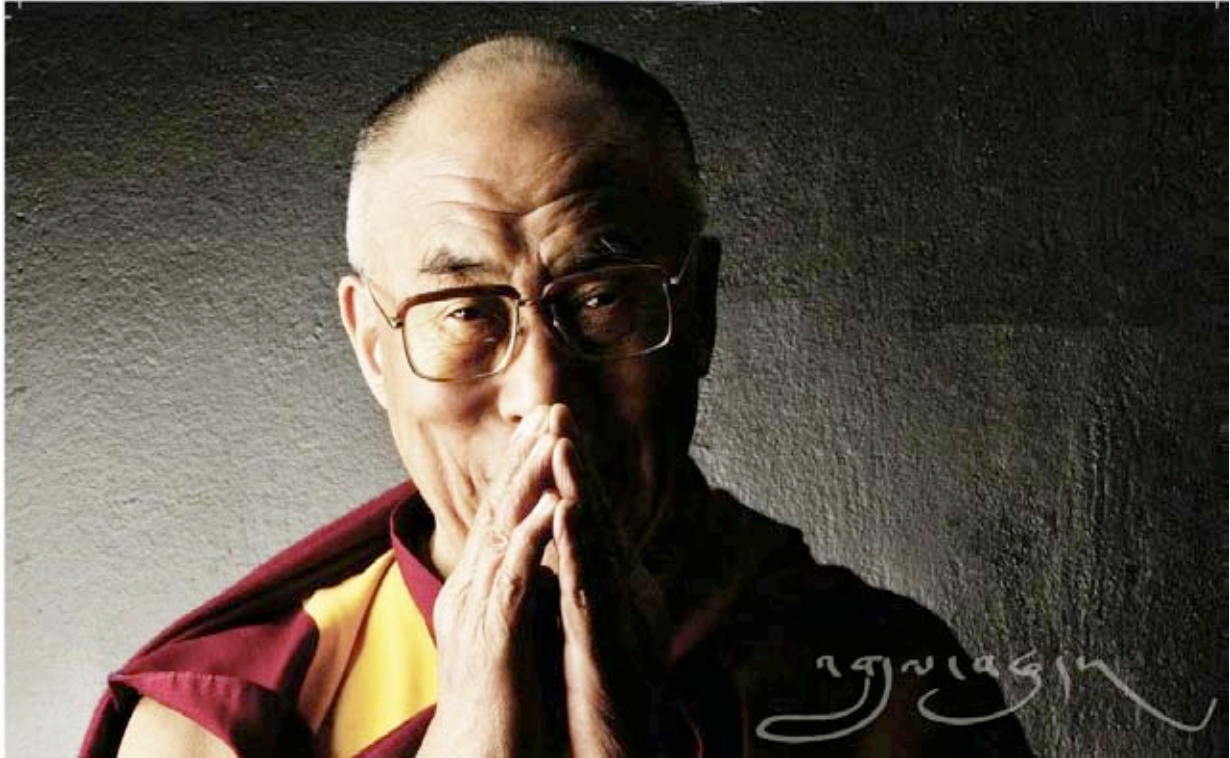
Atisha Centre is a Tibetan Buddhist meditation centre, providing opportunities for study and practice of a spiritual path, where people can develop their natural wisdom and compassion.

## 2013



## ANNUAL REPORT

## His Holiness 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso.



*“When I meet people in different parts of the world, I am always reminded that we are all basically alike: we are all human beings. Maybe we have different clothes, our skin is of a different colour, or we speak different languages. That is on the surface. But basically, we are the same human beings.*

*Human beings by nature want happiness and do not want suffering. With that feeling everyone tries to achieve happiness and tries to get rid of suffering, and everyone has the basic right to do this. In this way, all here are the same, whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, Easterner or Westerner, believer or non-believer, and within believers whether Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and so on. Basically, from the viewpoint of real human value we are all the same.*

*Human happiness and human satisfaction must ultimately come from within oneself. It is wrong to expect some final satisfaction to come from money or from a computer.*

*How can we eliminate the deepest source of all unsatisfactory experience? Only by cultivating certain qualities within our mindstream. Unless we possess high spiritual qualifications, there is no doubt that the events life throws upon us will give rise to frustration, emotional turmoil, and other distorted states of consciousness. These imperfect states of mind in turn give rise to imperfect activities, and the seeds of suffering are ever planted in a steady flow. On the other hand, when the mind can dwell in the wisdom that knows the ultimate mode of being, one is able to destroy the deepest root of distortion, negative karma and sorrow.”*



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Atisha Centre is a Tibetan Buddhist meditation centre, providing opportunities for study and practice of a spiritual path where people can develop their natural compassion and wisdom.*

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## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OCTOBER 2012 TO OCTOBER 2013**

DIRECTOR	CHERRY RATTUE
SPIRITUAL PROGRAM CO-ORDINATORS	LIAM CHAMBERS
SECRETARY	MARILYN CHAMBERS
TREASURER	MAXINE HAWKER
MEMBERSHIP	KATHY RICE
PUBLIC OFFICER	MARILYN CHAMBERS
ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS	MILO KEI BRIAN ASHEN JULIE SLOANE

## **THANK YOU**

Bendigo City Council, Jet Set Travel Bendigo,  
Bendigo Bank, Gary Hill, Builder.  
The Bead Shop Lyttleton Terrace, Star Cinema,  
Ron Dixon Excavations, Mitchell Street Florists,  
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs,  
AASB Accounting and Auditing Solutions Bendigo  
Little Ripper Digger Service, Maiden Gully  
Fitzpatrick's Hardware, Eaglehawk Bakery,  
Bendigo Whole Foods Lyttleton Terrace,  
Bolton's Office National, Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery  
The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion,  
Roger King's IGA Eaglehawk.

# ATISHA CENTRE

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Members and Friends,

Over the last few years, Atisha Buddhist Centre has been of increasing benefit to the local community, as a venue for meditation, retreats, and in providing access to teachings from many highly qualified Tibetan Buddhist teachers. We are fortunate to have as close neighbours the precious Sangha community at Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery, who work harmoniously with Atisha Centre to benefit students and the growing numbers of visitors who find their way here. During this past year Ven. Lhundrup, Ven. Gyatso and Ven. Jampa have given generously and enthusiastically in a number of ways to the Atisha Centre. Thank you Venerable Sangha, may you all continue to impart the precious teachings for a very long time. In addition, over the past year we have hosted and forged strong connections with FPMT visiting teachers Geshe Sherab, Ven. Tenzin Chogyi and Glen Svensson, and through their kindness Ven. Robina Courtin and Ven. Tony Beaumont have returned to our Centre to offer very popular teachings.

### Centre Services

Centre Services describes the everyday work that occurs in the Centre, including the regular volunteers and paid staff who work in these 'hands on' positions. As identified in the 2012 Strategic Plan, we require a suitably experienced person to co-ordinate the services and personnel for events, which includes working with groups hiring out the Centre. It is to the credit of the key people on the ground, as well as several committee members and the Director (who by default hold dual positions on the committee and in the Centre Services team), that we have thus far carried out this work without a dedicated co-ordinator. However, the growing numbers of students attending our robust spiritual programme, the spillover from the numbers of visitors to the Great Stupa, together with an increase in the groups who hire out the Centre's facilities, make it essential that we appoint a co-ordinator as soon as possible.

### Members and Volunteers

Our members and volunteers contribute immeasurably to Atisha Centre's compassionate activities and supportive environment, where all are welcome to learn about and directly benefit

from our spiritual programme. Our small core of dedicated kind hearted volunteers, many of whom are members, bring a joyful attitude to their work in the spiritual programme, in hospitality, housekeeping, gardening, maintenance and numerous other areas contribute to the smooth running of the Centre. The robust spiritual programme, and activities, especially hiring out the Centre for residential yoga retreats, require continuous team effort in the planning, preparation and clean up. My gratitude extends to all those who have worked with zeal in these varied areas. Thank you for taking to heart Lama Zopa Rinpoche's ethos of offering service to others, a compassionate path that leads to happiness and ultimately to enlightenment:

'You are working for every single cow and sheep, for all the animals, for them to achieve liberation from samsara and full enlightenment, as well as for every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single human being - not only in that state, not only in that country, but every single human being in the universe, in all the universes - and every single sura and asura being. You are working for everybody, EVERYBODY, to bring them to full enlightenment'.

### Executive Committee

The committee membership has remained stable and productive and has convened regularly throughout the year to carry out its responsibilities: to implement policies, review and oversee project performance and budgets, assess how we are meeting the needs of those using the Centre, to check the Centre's direction and to ensure the financial and legal health of the Centre. My deep felt appreciation goes to the office bearers and committee members who put in joyful effort and expend their energy for the benefit of the Centre. I thank those committee members who are stepping down, and welcome those who are joining the committee.

### Administration and Finance

Sue is the cheerful, helpful voice on the other end of the phone, usually the first person with whom visitors and participants make contact. She works Tuesday to Friday afternoons engaged in a variety of jobs, welcoming visitors, serving in the shop, taking care of arrangements for the participants, while attending to her primary office responsibilities.

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Maxine has worked at the Centre for four years, first as office manager and currently as finance manager, so she is aware of most of what goes on in the Centre. She is capable of cheerfully wearing many hats, and often does... in both her professional and volunteer capacities. Maxine continues to work part time to manage the financial duties of the Centre and Atisha Gifts.

## Financial Health

The financial health of the Centre is comprehensively reported in the Financial Report. However, a snapshot reveals the following income for the financial year: hiring out the centre \$21,798, membership subscriptions \$17,221 and accommodation \$15,967; donations to the spiritual programme, which include teachings and meditations, \$12,818, donations to Holy Objects \$4,173, donations to Buildings and Grounds \$3,729, and general donations \$10,078. Fees for courses and retreats fees brought in an additional gross income of \$50,006. However, after estimated outgoings associated with operational expenses, which includes facility costs, catering, offerings to teachers and their hosting and travel expenses, this leaves an approximate net profit of \$8,763 net profit from course income.

## Impermanence at Work

There has been very little coming and going this year yet impermanence is at work, as we have twice thanked Liam for his sterling work as co-ordinator of the Spiritual Programme. Thank you Liam for your generous service to Rinpoche and your love for the Centre, in stepping back into the position, after a brief break, when you were most needed. Liam contributed a great deal to the health and development of the Centre as SPC and as a committee member. Ruby was warmly welcomed in early July as the incoming SPC, and it is certain that her breadth of experience, kindness and warm humanity will serve the Centre well. We said goodbye to Hirani Chambers, Atisha News editor for two years, a task taken over by the indefatigable Liam, who has brought a fresh new look to our quarterly newsletter. Hannelore Best, key member of the team, will be leaving the position as Gomba Keeper at the end of December, thank you Hannelore for all your work.

Achievements June 2012- June 2013

Appointment of Ruby Karmay as the Spiritual Programme Co-ordinator  
Increased membership of the Spiritual Programme

Team - Julie Sloan and Jen Kyne

Continued robust and vibrant teaching programme

Strengthening links with the Daylesford Dharma School, Kopan Monastery, and local Aboriginal Elders

Participation in Cultural Diversity Week

Successful application for Lama Zopa's Merit Box Project Fund

Recipient of the local UFS Pharmacies member awards scheme

Increased revenue from hiring out the Centre to yoga and like minded groups

Atisha Gifts participated at the Loden Centre and His Holiness's Teachings

Advancement of the Strategic Directions

Refurbishment of the Tara Pond

Work re-commenced on the relocation of the Reclining Buddha statue

Fundraising commenced for the Deer and Dharmachakra for the main Gomba

Clearing and landscaping of land around and behind the accommodation

Preparatory work commenced on the Compassion and Wisdom gardens around the Buddha statue.

## Future

With a major increase in visits to the Great Stupa, and thus to Atisha Centre, it would be of great benefit for representatives of Atisha Centre to be available on site during the week and especially at weekends, to ensure that visitors and guests are personally welcomed and that their requirements, including questions about Buddhism, are met. In addition we would like to open the shop on both Saturdays and Sundays, and on public holidays. If you are interested in helping the Centre in this way please contact Liam Chambers.

I am overjoyed to confirm that in 2014 Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, our precious teacher and spiritual head of the FPMT, will be leading the Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition [CPMT] for a week in September followed by a retreat from 25th September to 23rd October. The Lama Zopa Australia Retreat Committee will again include representatives from Atisha Centre, Thubten Shedrup Ling and the Great Stupa, with Judith-Ann Robertson as the event co-ordinator. Three hundred retreatants attended the 2011 retreat with Rinpoche and we anticipate a greater number of students will attend in 2014. Following the successful 2011

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Retreat with Rinpoche Helen Patrin, FPMTA co-ordinator wrote to the Retreat Committee, saying that the 'location was and is the most ideal place in Australia to host such a large national retreat as it satisfies all of the accommodation requirements for

Rinpoche and his entourage, sangha communities and guests' and she informed us of the decision that all FPMTA centres, services and projects will need to help resource all future retreats led by Rinpoche. In 2011 over half the Atisha membership either attended the retreat or volunteered in some capacity; it was an intensive and superbly rewarding month for all of us, and it is once more our privilege to help make this retreat as meaningful and as comfortable as we can. Please consider offering your service to Rinpoche to help prepare for CPMT and for the retreat.

On a final note I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to you the members of Atisha Centre, for all you do to help the Centre to flourish, which exists solely to benefit sentient beings. Working together we can create a place of refuge and harmony for ourselves and for our many students and visitors. I leave you with Rinpoche's words of wisdom and love:

'What else in the world is there to do that is more important than helping others? To help ourselves, to help others, what is more important? There's nothing more important than serving in a Dharma Centre.'

Cherry Rattue  
Director

### **SPIRITUAL PROGRAM REPORT**

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said,  
" Sometimes people who are working at centres only think of the problems. Problems, problems, problems. Maybe it makes them feel sick. Their heart becomes very dry, very uninterested. [However,] if you know how to think, it's really unbelievable. The highest merit is collected and there is the greatest purification by working for the centre"

This is so true, the summary of the spiritual program below added to which we have hosted numerous yoga retreats indicates how busy we all

have been in the past 12 months, My heart, and I'm sure the hearts of all other who contribute to Atisha Centre are joyous for what we are able to contribute. But, as Rinpoche says with the correct motivation the energy is there and nothing is too running the centre is for the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings.

"Most important is the practice of Bodhicitta, serving all sentient beings as the master; to serve them. This is the bodhisattva attitude. Of course working at the centre, and taking care, your kindness is like the limitless sky". *Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

I would like to respectfully acknowledge, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and the lineage holders of the past. We rejoice in their kindness and guidance for the Spiritual Program here at Atisha Buddhist Centre. My heartfelt wish is that Dharma will continue to flourish here, in Australia and throughout the world for the benefit of sentient beings everywhere.

Throughout the year I constantly thought, and remarked how blessed and fortunate we are to have so many Sangha members who so generously give their time to assist the Atisha centre Spiritual Program. Atisha Centre is privileged to have the support of the Sangha from Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery. Their ongoing commitment to giving teachings, leading meditations and Pujas is of great benefit and sincerely appreciated in the implementation of the Spiritual Program. We can all rejoice in the presence of the 'Sangha Jewel'; their example, their concern and care for others has so much benefit to lay practitioners. I would like to sincerely thank Thubten Gyatso, Venerables Lhundrup, Tony Beaumont, Jampa and Namgyal and, how wonderful that we have so many other precious teachers who visit our centre. May it continue to be so.

Welcome to Maxine Hawker, Julie Sloane, Jen Kyne and Norma Clarke as new member of the SP team helping to set up and organize retreats and short courses. Thank you for your kind support of the Spiritual Program.

Our Spiritual Program in the last year was very extensive and varied and without help from many it would not have been as successful. My

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heartfelt thanks go to the following people who assisted in the Spiritual Program Support team; Ruby Karmay for initiating and leading a weekly Medicine Buddha practice at Atisha Centre in the Small Gompa; Hannelore Best who always has our Gompas beautifully prepared for all occasions Hannelore works tirelessly in support of the program, coordinating, assisting with planning and running many events. Al Gabay for leading practice days, Sutra reading days and leading meditations; Cameron Young, Ruby Karmay, Dennis Kenny, Genny Blades, Nic Aunger for leading meditations when the Sangha were unavailable; Molly Wiseman: for leading Tara Pujas and meditations; Cilla Brady and Ruby Karmay, for leading the Children's Dharma club.

A very special thank you to Gene and Shirley Marshall for their long time assistance with Tuesday evening meditation at Atisha Gifts in Bendigo and to Kathy Rice who is either first there or at least always there to lend a hand in any way.

To Ronda Rodwell and Maggie Wallace and all those who gave their time to support with preparing and serving the lunch and caring for the Sangha on Community Days.

Cherry has been an invaluable support to me as the SPC and the Spiritual Program, skillfully assisting and ensuring that the overall program of the Centre balanced, cohesive and continuous.

I re-assumed the role of Spiritual Program Coordinator in November 2012 after Nathalie who was appointed in July after a six month trial period decided that she did not want to continue in the position. Again, it has been a great privilege and much joy to have contributed to the Program.

It is with great respect I welcome Ruby Karmay to the role of Spiritual Program Coordinator, may her warm heart, her depth of practice, skills and abilities further develop and improve the Spiritual Program and ultimately the Atisha Centre for benefit of all sentient beings.

## SUMMARY OF SPIRITUAL PROGRAM

### MONTHLY PROGRAM

- Community Day - Meditation with Venerable Sangha and Dharma Club for Children

#### Pujas and Precepts

- Medicine Buddha Puja: are now held at 6.00 pm in the Small Gompa prior to teaching
- **Tara Pujas:** were held on calendar date until may 2013, they are now on the first Wednesday of each month
- Guru Puja
- Special Guru Pujas FOR LZR
- Special Tara Puja
- Precepts

### WEEKLY PROGRAM

#### Sunday

- Buddhist Meditation. There was a very significant increase in attendance at the centre during this year, upwards to 65 people.

#### Tuesday

- Buddhist Meditation at Atisha Gifts. A significant increase in attendance, upwards to 28.
- Karuna Relaxation Meditation at Atisha Gifts

#### Wednesday Teachings

- Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life  
Thubten Gyatso February to August
- Introduction to Emptiness.
- Dr Ross Moore September
- The Heart Sutra
- Venerable Tenzin Chogyi October
- Awakening the Kind Heart
- Venerable Thubten Lundrup November
- The Nature of Karma
- Venerable Thubten Lundrup December

### COURSES AND RETREATS

#### Courses

- Discovering Buddhism- The Spiritual Teacher. Venerable Lhundrup
- Discovering Buddhism- Death and Rebirth. Venerable Lhundrup (cancelled)
- Discovering Buddhism- Death and Rebirth. Venerable Lhundrup (cancelled)
- Buddhism in a Nutshell - Dr Al Gabay

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- Buddhism in a Nutshell.  
Venerable Lhundrup (cancelled) Low numbers
- Vajrasattva Practice Days. x 5  
Venerable Jampa
- One Day Meditation Retreat  
Venerable Jampa
- Casual Discussion. x10  
Venerable Jampa  
*Low number attended at the centre however, this improved when move in to Bendigo*
- Practice in the daily (Buddhist) Life.  
Venerable Jampa

## Weekend Courses

- Nyung Na. x 2  
Venerable Lhundrup
- The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva  
Venerable Geshe Sherab
- Emptiness for Beginners  
Dr. Ross Moore
- Dealing With Emotions  
Venerable Tenzin Chogyi
- Living Well - Dying Well  
Venerable Tenzin Chogyi
- Green Tara Retreat  
Venerable Tenzin Chogyi
- Medicine Buddha Retreat  
Thubten Gyatso

## Retreats

- Lam Rim and Meditation.  
Thubten Gyatso
- Buddhist Psychology and Meditation with  
Thubten Gyatso.
- Chenrezig Retreat and Light Offering  
Venerable Tony Beaumont
- Vajrasattva Retreat  
Ven. Robina Courtin

## Special Celebrations

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday celebration.
- International Sangha Day.
- Animal Blessing by Venerable Tenzin Chogyi
- Lama Tsong Khapa Day and Guru Puja.
- Sutra recitation - Sanghatta Sutra Dr A Gabay
- Special practiced for the benefit of the of LZR  
Ruby, Molly, Merilyn

## Practices For Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Health And Long Life – Khadro-la

***This is so important for us all to continue to do in order to support our precious spiritual director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche.***

Throughout the year Kadhro-la has been helping us with our practice for the health and long life of our precious jewel and guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche,

she is an extraordinary Tibetan woman who is widely considered as a dakini, an oracle, and regarded as very special by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Khadro-la is advising FPMT Centres including Atisha Centre to do certain practices as much as we can so that we can continue to have Rinpoche with us for a very long time.

Suggested practices include:

- Animal Liberation – do as much as possible or by donating online to Amitabha Buddhist Center. Text available in Essential Buddhist Prayers, vol 2.
- Recite Hayagriva mantras as much as possible, printed copies available in the Gompa.
- Tendil Nyersel prayer flags will be flown at Atisha Centre (the flags are being made at Kopan).
- Read the longer version of the Golden Light sutra x 67
- Recite Tara Praises at home or at Atisha Centre. We have been doing a Tara Puja on the first Wednesday of the month in the small Gompa at 6pm, practice 100,000 praises to Tara to be recited within Tara pujas.

Khadro-la says that the most important is good samaya from the students' side. When performing any practice we need to do it well, with good motivation and meditation.

Liam Chambers.  
Spiritual Program Coordinator.



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## STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

A strategic planning review day was held with members in May 2012, and the current strategic plan was developed by the Committee from this input and presented to the 2012 AGM. The committee has worked from this plan to implement the strategies and plan for the future. Strategies were prioritised by the committee and the top priorities for the 2012/13 year have been improving financial clarity and record keeping, working towards a reliable diversified income stream (from sources other than the spiritual program) with the goal of 4% increase in income stream per year, marketing and promotion of the centre and succession planning.

A segment of each management committee meeting has been dedicated to addressing the strategic plan and monitoring its implementation by volunteers and staff. It was recognised that a large workload is involved for the volunteers in maintaining the status quo of the Atisha Centre and that new initiatives require additional work and more volunteers. Our goal setting has been tempered by this and we have made it our top priority to ensure that the program we offer is sound, well supported and comprehensive. Considerable work has gone into broadening and deepening the Spiritual program and ensuring that the centre management is strong and accountable, both financially and in terms of our support for volunteers and our role in the community.

An updated strategic plan will be available at the Annual General Meeting.

Marilyn Chambers,  
Secretary.

## ATISHA CENTRE GIFT SHOP

The Atisha Gifts shop continues as the Centre's retail venture. Staffed by volunteers, this enables the provision of an income stream and the dissemination of knowledge about Buddhism and about the Centre. We did have very good sales at His Holiness Dalai Lama's teachings in Sydney in June, where we virtually sold out. This is the future of our venture, I believe, to have the Centre shop open on Saturdays and Sundays, during retreats and when hiring out the facilities such as yoga days and retreats, and to pursue

sales at events like the Sydney teachings. Further down the road, it may be possible to offer goods for purchase through our website, but this depends on having sufficient merchandise and volunteers. The goods offered for sale have changed over the last couple of years, and there are new suppliers to keep an interesting diversity of merchandise, but the basis continues to be Dharma books and practice items, along with general gift items, incense, jewellery and shawls. I wish to acknowledge

my gratitude to our dedicated band of shop volunteers, some of whom travel long distances, who continue to offer a friendly and helpful presence to our members and friends. From myself and the other volunteers, I give heartfelt thanks for your continuing support.

Al Gabay  
Manager, Atisha Centre Gift Shop

## ATISHA GIFTS BENDIGO

In last year's Annual Report I was pleased to report on the increased sales assisted by the 'Grace Kelly: Style Icon' exhibition at the Bendigo Art Gallery. Unfortunately sales declined after the exhibition closed. Ishka opened a large franchise in Pall Mall just before the Christmas period, which appears to have had a negative impact on sales. We had stocked the shop in expectation of good sales over Christmas, but as sales were disappointing we were left with a lot of stock well into the year. Some goods, which previously sold very well have dropped off and we have sold them at heavily discounted prices. Books, CDs Salt lamps, Tree of Life wall hangings, Nepalese woolly socks and regular incense are still our best sellers, brass and

glass wind chimes and hangings remain steady sellers. Some lines of silk shawls from Kashmir sold well. With the downturn in retail hitting small businesses we have encountered financial constraints, purchasing has been minimal and turnover has been slow.

Most of the time we have just enough volunteers to cover shifts, with a couple of people who can fill in on an emergency basis. However, Darren and I have both filled in on a voluntary basis for absent volunteers and from time to time the shop

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has had to close for an afternoon or morning. The shop continues to promote the Spiritual Programme at Atisha Centre, and Tuesday evening meditation with Ven. Jampa has been the subject of many enquiries and has proved very popular. A number of people come in to get the Atisha News and find out about the programme.

In summary, despite our excellent location adjacent to complementary businesses and cafes, there has been a sharp drop in sales and turnover has slowed. There has been some difficulty in meeting our bottom line and currently the viability of the shop is under review. Finally, my sincere thanks go to all the volunteers who regularly work at Atisha Gifts, and to Susie in the Bead Shop next door for generously sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities with us!

Elaine Doling  
Atisha Gifts Shop Manager

### ATISHA CENTRE LIBRARY

The library continues to be well used in its location in the small gompa. New members, especially, seem to be finding it a useful resource. Timely returns continue to be an issue for some items and members are requested to return books and AV items so that they can be put back into circulation for others to access. We run on an honour system so rely on the co-operation of all library users. All returns should be put in the returns basket - please do not reshelve as this can sometimes result in books going to wrong shelves. There are still some outstanding jobs to be done - ie cataloguing new books and placing the catalogue online - and these will take place before the end of 2013.

Happy reading!  
Hannelore

### CHILDREN'S DHARMA CLUB

This year I have enjoyed facilitating the monthly Children's Dharma Club, with help from Ruby, who facilitated when I was unavailable. Readings of stories from the Buddha's life and Jataka tales, from various sources including the Atisha library and my own books, gave us material for discussion. My

focus is on how the Buddhist principles and simple practices can be applied to everyday life, and also encouraging meditation at home.

In each session we do a guided meditation and sing a song or two in English. There are a lot of English Buddhist songs that are easy, enjoyable, with messages to impart. We also do an art project each time, making cards, origami, colouring in of Buddhist images or symbols, puzzles, etc.

Parents and caregivers have the choice to stay or go to the main Gompa if their children are old

enough (at least 6 years old) and feel comfortable without them. The adults who stay enjoy the activities and usually participate, sometimes reading the story for instance, and helping their child with the art project. If they like they can also just relax and enjoy reading from the library, which sometimes is the case.

The attendance has been very low, maximum attendance was four children, the minimum was one. The usual attendance was two-three children. It seems that there could be more advertising of the Children's Dharma Club to the wider community to increase attendance. It could be a way to bring new adult participants to the centre. It would also be beneficial to facilitate the Karen families' return to Community Days and the children to Dharma Club. I have brought both these ideas to the attention of the committee.

The small Gompa has a concrete floor, which is cold, and makes it very hard to be without shoes in the winter. I have worn shoes and so have some of the children. This may dismay some of Atisha Centre members, but to make it a shoeless environment I would suggest thicker insulated complete carpet coverage.

Cilla Brady

### GROUNDS AND GARDENS

Many people have put in a lot of time and effort, to create and maintain the gardens. People often comment on how good they look, especially those who have not visited for a long time. Keeping the gardens alive is hard work due to the very harsh environment. The ground is hard and mostly clay with no topsoil and the summers are extremely

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hot and dry with no rainfall.

I have been here three years and during that time the main people watering have been Celia, Hannelore, and Cathy and in the last year Helen and Marianne have helped. There has been occasional help from a few other members as well as some retreat participants engaged in karma yoga. The gardens need constant watering through the spring, summer and autumn until any decent rains come, and even then quite a few plants still wilt. More people are needed to step forward and spend some time watering them. The plants can never be given too much water as it takes so long to penetrate deep enough. Each plant needs 60 seconds minimum of hose time and this gives the waterer a good chance to use the time to contemplate their dharma teachings! Marianne is continuing to volunteer on Thursdays and has made a huge difference to the gardens, creating mounds around all the plants that need watering, as well as constant weeding and mulching flower beds.

Achievements this year include the removal of thirteen tree stumps, on an ongoing basis dripper systems are being rebuilt, work continues around the new location for the Reclining Buddha, weeding is ongoing and help is needed from members with the weeding during spring, and watering during summer. The areas around the Garden Buddha and the accommodation building have been cleared and terra formed, creating a very spacious feel. Dietmar, who volunteers on Wednesdays has rebuilt a low wall in the arbour. Building on the work of others Celia is spearheading the beautification of the Buddha Gardens with the creation of the Wisdom and Compassion garden beds on either side of the Buddha. She is making it 'nicer' as Rinpoche advised on his 2011 visit to Atisha Centre. We are all making it 'nicer' in anticipation of Rinpoche's six week stay with us next year.

Thank you to all the volunteers who take care of the gardens, on a final note we are in need of good hoses and timers to continue to take care of the gardens.

Steve Williams

## WEBSITE AND NETWORK

Atisha Centre annual report – Website and electronic social media - Marilyn

Our website continues to grow and provide a valuable service in increasing efficiency for our centre. It tells the world about our centre, links to like-minded groups and provides an up to date calendar. It facilitates memberships, booking of course, publicity of the centre, inquiries and also our ENews. Currently the ENews goes to 853 people world wide. We are now on Facebook and Twitter and Gina provides weekly inspirational messages to enrich our lives as well as spreading the publicity for courses and events at the centre.

Marilyn Chambers  
Secretary

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

It is pleasing to be able to report that of the 31<sup>st</sup> June 2013 membership to Atisha Centre was 88 up from 74 at the same time last year.

Of this, 45 members opted to pay by direct debit on a monthly basis and the remainder subscribed for either a twelve month or 6 month period. Over the past 12 months many of our subscribers have taken advantage of the benefits available with an Atisha Centre membership. The two nights free accommodation and the 10% discount on most courses haven proven to be very popular. Also quite a few members offered their free nights to others, enabling them to participate in courses and Nyung Na practices.

We extend a sincere **"thank you"** to all our members for their ongoing support and we rejoice in the merit created through their kindness and generosity.



*With Big  
Love & prayer*

