



Encouraging Words

Subhana Towards Wholesome Wise Action

I'm grateful for the gentle weather that heralds in the New Year. What is our relationship with beginnings and endings in these tumultuous changing and challenging times of great uncertainty? While today is comfortable, a massive heat wave is predicted soon, spreading across Australia. At the end of 2025, we all witnessed the terrible shootings at Bondi, the violence of antisemitism and its tragic aftermath, rippling through our Australian shores. It is an urgent invitation to reflect on how zazen and the liberating dharma teachings help us to respond compassionately and not get caught up in further polarisation, blaming and divisive rhetoric. Zen is wholesome medicine in these troubling fracturing times.

A monk came to Zen master Zhaozhou asking, "When difficult times come to visit us, how should we meet them?" Zhaozhou, a master at sublime one-word responses said, "Welcome." That welcome is vast and wide; it is the depth and breadth of our world. It takes fearless presence with a heart flung open. To genuinely say welcome is to not only accept our feelings, but have a mindful grounded presence and know you are already at home, right where you stand.

Practices of mindfulness, compassion and liberation that wake up the heart-mind establish that at-homeness, knowing our original timeless dwelling place. They have been the healing medicine through generations of war and strife, a true refuge. An inner revolution is paramount to transforming consciousness, otherwise we habitually act out and perpetuate the same old dramas. Zazen offers a safe cushion to drop into a still, spacious awareness that helps us to acknowledge and respond and manage our own array of feelings, perhaps grief, fear and anger. Emotional regulation is one of the significant benefits of meditation practice, it leads to emotional intelligence and maturity. A grounded presence of mind enables us to respond compassionately to the push and pull, the frayed carpet of our wider social communal life. When we sit together with companions of the Way, we create a safe place to support one another, mat-to-mat, walking as one to go deeper into the common ground of our humanity and deeper still, sitting together with the trees, clouds and great earth.

We also need a deep inquiry into what creates division: the fundamental separation between self and other. The Buddha pointed out that in the first fold of the Noble Path, that this is the result of our attachment to views and judgments that reinforce self-identity. The self-identity project,

perpetuates ‘selfing’ and ‘othering’, which only creates more suffering. Seeing into the dependent arising constructed nature of the self, is our deeper work. As Zen master Dogen famously said, “To study the Buddha Way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self, to forget the self is to be awakened by the 10,000 things”. By studying the self, we see into the nature of the mind. Views are just conceptual formulations in the mind that are dependent, socially and culturally driven. Freedom is to hold views lightly and not be defined by them.

I have been really touched by many of the honest, vulnerable sharings in recent peace circles and our reflections in the full moon precept ceremony that are facilitated throughout the year. Inclining the heart and mind towards wholesome wise action, gives us active hope, it keeps reminding each other how to stay on track through the trials and tribulations of our daily lives. It is heartening to feel that we are creating a culture of awakening, step-by-step, hand-in-hand. I look forward to sitting with you all again in our homely city zendo under a vast sky.

With metta, Subhana

Upcoming events

Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Ceremony

Sunday 12 April, 11am - 12 noon, then lunch

This is a family-friendly event when the birth of Siddhartha Gautama is celebrated in Zen sanghas around the world. Bring flowers (if you have them) and food to share for our potluck lunch, which we'll enjoy in the garden, weather permitting, from noon.

Before the ceremony, Shauna and her daughters Marisol and Saoirse will show us how to make origami paper cranes and colour in mandalas and flowers to give the Baby Buddha - come out to the garden around 10.30 am.

The ceremony begins at 11 am with Gillian Coote roshi's introductory words, then each child comes to the altar with their parents to be welcomed into our sangha. Then, while chanting the *Enmei Jikku Kannon Gyo*, each of us comes to the altar and pours water over the statue of the baby

Buddha, offering him a gift or flower, then sharing songs and stories.

It is helpful to know who is coming so do let us know, and whether you would like your child or baby named and/or welcomed to our sangha.

Contact Shauna Murray:
shauna.murray@uts.edu.au



Autumn Samu 2026

28-29 March, Kodoji

Time, my sangha friends, to plan and come along to Autumn samu up the Gorricks valley to Kodoji.

So keep the weekend of the 28-29 March ready to do good sangha work together.

Hopefully by the time we get there much of the high-level painting will have been done so we can concentrate on detail work around windows and along the main verandah.

And of course here we go again with mowers and snippers and brooms and hammers and duct tape and laughter and silence and wood chopping and great food and starry, starry nights.

Samu is lots of fun – bring your family and friends it's always a good chance to extend sangha relations!!

Let me know if you can make it.

Brendon: stewarts34@bigpond.com

Womens' Retreat

March 7-8, Kodoji

The annual Women's Retreat is open to all women who have a meditation practice.

The cost is \$25 for members \$30 non-members per night. The activities are agreed by the women who attend. These include quiet time, social time, zazen, creative endeavours, walks and enjoying delicious food. Enquiries and bookings jillsteverson@gmail.com



On the Road to Gorricks. Pastel by Janet Selby

Reports

Rohatsu Sesshin 2025



Rohatsu at Annandale is always a patchwork phenomenon. Eighteen uniquely colorful participants gathered over the course of five days, in different blocks, often in different combinations. We were especially delighted to have Angela Neville back in her home sangha, sitting fulltime.

In a Japanese winter Rohatsu sesshin is known as the Great Cold. This recent Rohatsu, in Sydney summer, could have been called Great Heat, thanks to two days of high temperature extremes.

Sweating on the cushion

ceased to be just a metaphor. Sitters were encouraged to take time out if needed and ice blocks were on offer. Beautiful altar flowers stood strong and then wilted. "Oh well," said Glenys. "Let's go with wabi sabi." They were a lesson in impermanence.

As ever at the zendo, roaring plane dharma was on offer, vanquishing thoughts.

We were instructed to "maintain the essence" while eating and drinking, and duly rejoiced in elegant early morning tea, along with intimate communal breakfasts and suppers at the round table, "inexhaustible feast offerings."

Maintaining the essence, we came and we went, realizing that "true movement is actually circumambulation." We wandered kinhin in White's Creek Valley Park, grateful for the life abounding there.

And the Buddha woke up. And each of us faithfully walked the path he set forth, step.by.step.waking.up.not.knowing.



Wilted Wabi Sabi on the altar

News from the Board

Substack

Our teachers' talks are now available on Substack – a digital publishing platform – so the Dharma told by our SJC teachers is spreading even wider! Thanks to William for the idea and for setting it all up.

You can subscribe here: https://substack.com/@sydneyzencentre?utm_source=edit-profile-page

What's On

Rachel has offered to revamp the look of our What's On, and Stephen and Sean are going to help with the technical side. It will take a little while to design and refine, but soon you'll see a bright new online publication of our Zen events. Thank you, dear dharma friends for putting your expertise, time and energy into this project.

Donation

The Board would like to thank John Becket, who sat with us in the late 80s and early 90s before he moved out of Sydney, for his very generous donation of money to our Centre _^_

Sesshin coordinators needed!

To spread the joy of volunteering, the Board has collated all the information necessary for a member to take up the role of a sesshin coordinator. Also, experienced members are happy to mentor you. So, if you're wanting to help, and haven't done the job before, please contact William: jwgverity@gmail.com or Kerry: stewartkerry4@gmail.com



Frog Meditation by the Creek, Gorricks. Drawing by Janet Selby

Regular Notices

Please see the regular SZC email reminders for Zoom links, or email info@szc.org.au for details.

Mondays

Annandale - Subhana

Tuesdays online

Mini morning meditation

6.55–7.00am Join/welcome,
7.00–7.25am Meditation,
7.25–7.30am Great Vows

Wednesdays

Annandale - Gillian Coote or Will Moon

Thursdays online

With Jane Andino or Peter Bursky,
7.00–8:00pm Meditation/walking,
8.00–8.30pm Discussion/Great Vows

Dokusan for members

Annandale - Dokusan is offered to members by our teachers on some Mondays and every Wednesday

Phone - Dokusan is offered by Subhana on Thursdays and Gillian by appointment

The Blue Mountains Zen Group

We usually meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, 3-5 pm.

All are welcome to join us for zazen with either a talk or Dharma Café.

Email Jane janeandino@yahoo.com.au for more details.

Wahroonga Friends, Upper North Shore

Saturday mornings, from 9:30am to 11:30am.

We have sittings scheduled for Saturday February 7, 14, March 14, April 4 and 18.

On February 21, we'll have a zazenkai from 9am -1pm, with sutras, zazen, dokusan, teisho and a shared potluck lunch.

The Meeting House: 59 Boundary Road Wahroonga

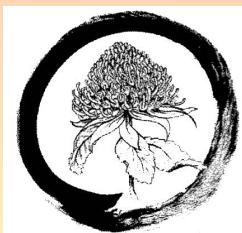
Inquiries to Maggie: 0413 018 100, magpiewarble@yahoo.com

Online opportunities

If you can't come to the zendo because you live too far away, or you have work or family commitments, or you are restricted in your ability to travel, we have a solution for you.

Meditation is available online via Zoom every Tuesday morning (6.55am – 7.30am) and Thursday evening (6.50pm – 8.30pm) led by two of our teachers - Jane Andino and Peter Bursky. And you can even become an online SZC member for a very special price!

Go to the website for more details: <https://szc.org.au/classes/online-meditation/>



Members of the Board

Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) stewartkerry4@gmail.com; Zoe Thurner (secretary); Scott Nelson (treasurer); Joe Gaebel; Sean Loughman.

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SZC: info@szc.com.au, www.szc.org.au

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 ZAZEN Annandale FMC Not defaming the 3 treasures 7-9pm Subhana	3	4 ZAZEN Annandale FMC Not defaming the 3 treasures 7-9pm Will	5 ZAZEN Zoom FMC Not defaming the 3 treasures 7-8:30pm Jane	6	7
8	9 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	10	11 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	12 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	13	14
15 Zazenkai Jane	16 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	17	18 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Will	19 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	20	21
22	23 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	24	25 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	26 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	27	28

March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	3	4	5 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	6	7 Womens' Retreat
8 Womens' Retreat	9 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	10	11 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	12 Dharma Cafe Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	13	14
15 Zazenkai Peter	16 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	17	18 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Will	19 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	20	21
22	23 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	24 Orientation	25 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	26 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	27	28 Samu at Kodoji
29 Samu at Kodoji	30 ZAZEN Annandale FMC Not Killing 7-9pm Subhana	31				