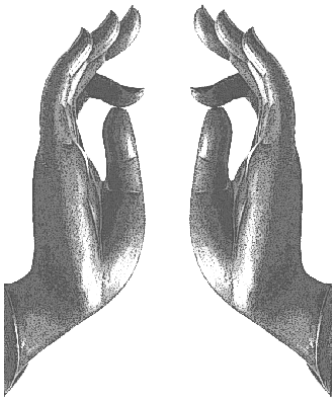

ONE HEART-ONE MIND

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

JULY 2011

Sangha Lodge:

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Lewisham NSW 2049
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sanghalodge@optusnet.com.au
www.engagedbuddhists.metta.org.au

Please note: Friday is a day of silence at Sangha Lodge, please call or visit at another time.

Meditation and Dhamma Teaching

7.30pm every Monday night.
Join with others in sitting practice.

7.30pm every Wed night.
Meditation evenings include a Dhamma talk followed by around half an hour of guided sitting practice. Beginners or more experienced meditators are equally welcome. There is no charge for the teachings although donations are welcome as this is Sangha Lodge's only means of support..

Dana Days

Dana Days are held on the first Sunday of each month. Attendees bring food to offer to the Sangha and to share with each other. This is a great way to show respect for the Sangha and enjoy a delicious meal with others in the lay community.

Please note that we must start promptly at 10:30am in order for the Sangha to finish eating by noon.

The next Dana Day will be Sunday 4th September

WHY DO WE MEDITATE?

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country at a town of the Kurus named Kammasadhamma. There he addressed the monks thus: 'Monks." "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this: [DIRECT PATH]. 'Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of Nibbana, namely, the four satipatthanas.

[DEFINITION]

"What are the four? Herein monks, in regard to the body a monk abides contemplating the body, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the World. In regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to dhammas he abides contemplating dhammas, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.

[BREATHING]

"And how, monks, does he in regard to the body abide contemplating the body? Here, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, he sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

"Breathing in long, he knows 'I breathe in long,' breathing out long, he knows 'I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he knows 'I breathe in short,' breathing out short, he knows 'I breathe out short.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body,' he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation,' he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out calming the bodily formation.'

"Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, knows 'I make a long turn,' or when making a short turn knows 'I make a short turn' so too, breathing in long, he knows I breathe in long,'... (continue as above).

[REFRAIN]

In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally, or he abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

"That is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body.

[From the beginning of SATIPATTHANA SUTTA translated by Venerable Analayo Bhikku]

Often people ask, "Why practise meditation?" or "What is the purpose, point or goal of meditation practise?" Sometimes even those who have made several retreats will puzzle over these questions. Other people who have no experience of meditation also frequently ask, "Why do we practise?"

Continued on Page 3...

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 1pm on Sunday 6th November 2011 (following Dana day). The business for this meeting will be:

* Presentation of Annual Report and Financial Statements
* Election of a new Management Committee for 2012

All are welcome to attend. Voting is limited to paid-up members. Members who have been members of the Association for more than one year are entitled to stand for committee.

Raffle

As always we run our major raffle along with the Food Fair. Again this year our sponsors Reliance Travel have supplied the first prize – a return ticket to Malaysia. The raffle will not be drawn until Sunday 4th September (Dana Day) so you can still buy tickets or take a book to sell. Thanks to those who have been selling tickets and please remember to get the butts and money back to Sangha Lodge by 4th September. Our thanks go to Reliance travel for their support – please support them in return by inviting them to organise your next trip.

Raising funds for carpets at Vejjasala

Before we can make use of the building at Vejjasala, we need to carpet four areas – a double bedroom, dormitory room and hall and the separate building, which we call the cottage – formerly a library but now being converted to sleeping accommodation. The cottage is a very big space – 10m by 5m. All of these rooms have concrete or tiled floors so carpeting is not a luxury but a necessity. Without it the rooms are very cold in the Southern Highlands winter. Three of our members, Lily Koo, Saw Gaik Chong and Elaine Mah took it upon themselves to raise funds for the carpets and have more than succeeded. They have raised over $12,000! Congratulations to them and thanks to everyone who contributed. The additional money that they raised which is not needed for the carpet will go towards the roof repairs. Donations for building repairs and renovations and for fixtures such as carpets go through the Building Fund and are therefore fully tax deductible.

Vejjasala Opening Day

Our official opening at Vejjasala will be held on Sunday 11th September. Starting time is 10.30am. We will be inviting Sangha members from our neighbouring monasteries in the Southern Highlands. Please bring food to offer to the Sangha and to share for lunch. Further details of the program and directions to Wingello are provided elsewhere in the newsletter.

Membership Renewal

September is our month for membership renewal. Membership renewal forms will be appearing at Sangha Lodge and on the website. In order to keep our Membership Database up-to-date, we do ask that you hand on one of these forms with your payment even if even if your details have not changed from last year. Membership remains at $30 a year and entitles you to vote for the Organising Committee and after being a member for a year, to stand for a committee position. Our existing members work hard to keep Sangha Lodge functioning and to make meditation support and Dhamma teaching available to all. With the opening of our retreat centre at Vejjasala we need our existing members more than ever and more committed supporters. If you haven't formally joined as a member please consider doing so and if you're already a member please renew as early as possible.

Dhamma Exploration Group

The Dhamma Exploration group will be held on Saturday 20th August and will be hosted by Serge Bodlander. The topic is Theravada Buddhism-East and West. Join us for a lively discussion and a cup of tea. Starting time is 4pm and discussion closes at 6 pm.

With much metta to everyone

Sue Toohey—President

Rains Retreat

The months of July to October are traditionally a time when Buddhist monks engage in a period of retreat and intense meditation. At a Wednesday meeting in July Bhante encouraged us to use this time to intensify our own practice.. If you are interested in dong this, some of the things you might try could be:

Read the Buddha's teachings in is own words…the suttas. You will find a good selection of them at www.accesstoisight.com

Try to meditate for a slightly longer time or more often during the week.

Think about the paramitas that Bhante directed us to earlier in the year (see the April Newsletter)

Do some volunteer work. You can find out about opportunities near you through www.volunteering.com.au

Register as an organ donor. http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/aodr/index.jsp

Join Amnesty International (www.amnesty,org.au) or Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org/asia/australia

May you and many others benefit from your efforts during the Rains Retreat.

VISITING TEACHER

Our visiting teacher on Wed 31 August. Will be Giles Barton

Giles first came into contact with the Buddha's teachings in 1983. He has wandered along that path since then, following the Thai Forest meditation Theravaden tradition from the late nineties. He has completed several long retreats at Bodhinyana monastery in Perth and has practiced at Wat Buddha Dhamma in Wiseman's Ferry since Judith Lai first took him there in 1988.

Giles has sat and practiced with or been taught by many teachers from around the world lay and monastic and provides ongoing support to the Wat and Santi Forest monasteries either through committee membership or support of the Sangha. He has lead a number of retreats over the years and taught regularly at the Buddhist Library in Camperdown. He has a special interest in Buddhism and meditation for young people which reflects his professional work in child and adolescent mental health.

Why Do WE Meditate?

...continued from Page 1.

There some are people who will very confidently answer these questions in terms of attaining all sorts of things but they fail to really read, contemplate and understand the Buddha's words in this sutta and in other teachings throughout the Pali Canon. They see meditation as about getting something, whether that be some exalted mind-state, some super-normal power (iddhi or siddhi) or something much more mundane like wealth or material goods (in this life or the next). When you really make inquiry into these answers you will find a large dose of grasping and desire usually at work. This is frequently accompanied by a very large sense of self. The Buddha's reason why we practise is found in the opening verses of this sutta.

First the Buddha calls his listeners to attention by addressing them directly, "Monks" We should as the inheritors and contemporary readers of this teaching also pay close attention to the words of the Buddha and not obscure them with our own or others ideas about the nature of meditation. This attentiveness is the first requisite to good solid practise.

The Buddha then immediately tells us why we practise, "….for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of Nibbana,…"

Every human being can surely recognise themselves in these words. Each of us knows, sorrow and lamentation, dukkha and discontent. Each of us knows or recognises the need for purification from greed, hatred and delusion. In this teaching the Buddha says, "Listen, here is a way which leads only in the direction of the overcoming and cessation of these things" which bring us and others so much suffering and sadness.

Already some people will have turned away and stopped listening.

Then the Buddha points out that it is via the body itself that we must begin this journey toward freedom, "And how, monks, does he in regard to the body abide contemplating the body? Here, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, he sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out…."

This affirmation of the centrality of the body itself as a vehicle of practise does not please those who prefer a more lofty notion of spiritual pursuit often seeking to escape the body and its reality for a more esoteric experience of the spiritual life and practise. However it is the Buddha we ought listen to and his advice, grounded in his own experience and enlightenment is to begin here with this body and this breath. In this moment, here and now.

Soon we shall be opening our new retreat centre Vejjasala, Place of Healing at Wingello.

This is a real place, solid, living and breathing, not some fancy idea. A beautiful geographic location within which we hope to experience the healing power, potential, and blessing of the Buddha's teaching especially on meditation and to be able to share that, to give it as a gift to others who may also be seeking to, overcome "sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent…."

The foundations of Vejjasala are to be found in the teaching of the Buddha and within the good and generous hearts of those who come there as friends, supporters, workers, visitors and guests seeking healing and heartfelt care.

I invite and implore you to be a part of this to the fullest extent possible. In this way you will ground and deepen your own practise of Dhamma and help to free yourself from dukkha and discontent.

I invite you to become a real kalyanmitta. Bring your body to Vejjasala to help turn the wheel of Dhamma.

With every blessing of the Dhamma.

Bhante Tejadhammo

Open Day at Vejjasala

You are invited to join us for the Vejjasala Open Day on Sunday 11 September at 219 Forest Rd Wingello.

Please bring a contribution to lunch that you can offer to the Sangha and share with fellow guests.

The program for the day will be as follows:

* **10.30am.** Welcome. Honouring of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha; Taking refuge and the Precepts. Chanting followed by a short meditation.
* **11am.** Offering of Dana to Sangha members and lunch for the community and welcome guests
* **12.30pm.** Official opening with a special Dhamma Desana & brief speeches followed by a formal processional blessing by Sangha and all present. (weather permitting)
* **2 pm** Conclusion of all formalities followed by an Informal afternoon tea and guided walks

Getting to Wingello

Wingello is easy driving from Sydney via the M5 motorway. It takes 1hour 40 minutes from Sangha Lodge at Lewisham.

Get onto the M5 highway (the highway to Canberra) and continue onto the Hume Highway, crossing over the Illawarra Highway before turning off to the left at the Wingello sign (Murrimba Rd). Follow Murrimba Rd for 6km to Wingello village.

Wingello village consists of a train station and a general store plus houses. As you come into the main street, facing the General Store, turn right and Forest Rd is the first turn on the left. Follow Forest Rd just over 2km from the village to the property.

It is possible to drive to Wingello through the towns of Mittagong, Bowral, Moss Vale and Bundanoon but this is a longer and slower route so better to stay on the highway.

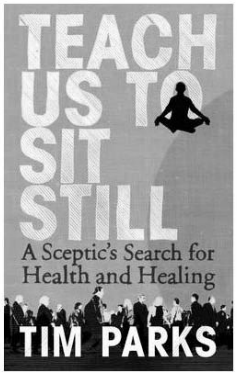
A Reader Recommends

In this issue, our recommendation for an interesting book comes from **Carolie Lurie, our Retreat Coordinator.**

Caroline would like to share the enjoyment and benefit she got from reading *Teach Us to Sit Still: A Sceptic's Search for Health and Healing* by Tim Parks (Published by Harvill Secker 2010, Paperback, 335 pages. ISBN: 9781846553998)

Tim Parks, teacher, translator and author of twenty books of fiction and non-fiction, finds himself at the age of 51 suffering increasing chronic pain and having to visit the bathroom 6 times per night. The symptoms point to prostate or bladder problems, but all the test show that these organs are completely healthy.

On a conference in India, Parks, uncharacteristically and with misgivings, consults an Ayurvedic doctor who astonishes him mightily by telling him that he will never get over his problem until he 'confronts the profound contradictions in his character.' This prognosis, plus a suggestion that his astrology chart might be helpful, is too much for the Anglican-born (tho' now firmly atheist) author. He rejects the 'mumbo-jumbo', but can't quite forget the remark. He changes his diet, and goes onto the net where he discovers, to his horror, literally millions of similar sufferers whose pain has not been alleviated by medication or surgery.



In outraged confusion he turns to a book called *A Headache in the Pelvis* which recommends meditation. Sceptical but desperate, Parks tries it, and experiences all the frustrations and irritations of the beginning meditator. Yet occasional glimpses of insight keep him going. In between meditation session he begins to understand the extreme tension his body is holding, has been holding for years. He also begins to see clearly some of his internal conflicts: with his father, his tussles with language, his expatriate life in Italy.

He turns, naturally, to writers for help: D.H. Lawrence, Beckett, Woolf, Coleridge, even though he now recognises that his reliance, even obsession, with words and language are a significant part of his problem. Overcoming deep-seated scepticism, he submits himself to the discipline of Vipassana retreats. His hostility to all forms of religion is challenged by unanticipated experience. He begins to see how he has used language as a barrier to experience rather than an expression of it. While acknowledging that what happens to him in meditation cannot be reduced to words, he nonetheless manages some wonderfully convincing descriptions.

We know, of course, what the end of this search for healing will be, but there are elements which make the book entirely engrossing. Even in his worst moment, Parks is able to see the funny side of his predicament. In entertaining, readable prose, he fumes and rages his way to health. Block after block has to be overcome – many of them will resonate with regular practitioners – but Parks is determined, intelligent and just open-minded enough to have his entire world view turned upside down along the way. This is a most inspiring and satisfying work.

Sample from *TEACH US TO SIT STILL*

'Only when the mind had been tamed and tied down to the breath crossing the lip, like a dog to a chain, could we progress...Towards the end of the last session, something happened. In the midst of the usual fierce pains, with a strange naturalness and inevitability, my consciousness at last fused with my upper lip: the breath, the lip, the mind, these apparently incompatible entities did, in fact, fit together, flow together, were one. I was my lip bathed in soft breath. At once the breathing that had been irregular and forced subsided to a light caress passing back and forth across the skin, a soft rising and falling breathed, not by me it seemed, but by my whole body, by the air outside my body, by everything around me. Then, as if at the touch of a switch, the scalding rigidity tensing thighs and hips dissolved. In a moment the lower body sank into suppleness. Where there had been a formless pain, I became aware of thighs, knees, calves, ankles, feet. A strange heat was being forced downward through them. My bare feet were cold but a hot pain was passing out pleasantly through the soles.

'The experience could not have been more unexpected. Or more welcome. I was immediately anxious it must end at once, anxious that some malignant thought would rise up to cancel it out...I focused on that breath that now seemed so strangely detached from me, or rather that I was just a small part of, as if the boundaries that routinely separated me from the world that was not me had blurred. And after perhaps a minute – but there is no measuring time in these circumstances – like a prisoner released from a yoke, my back, which had been cramped and bent, rose gently upright and was straight. As it did so, I was aware of each of the muscles that quietly lifted it. I felt now natural the erect position was. I felt blessed.

'A few moments later and things were back to normal: the pain, the frustration, the waiting for he gong that would bring release.' (p. 236-237)

'Uncalled for, unwanted, the thoughts flew across my mental space, back and forth, hither and thither, like birds in the evening sky, chasing and losing and finding each other, racing, wheeling, dispersing, gathering, sliding a while then flapping in hard flight, always moving, through each other and across each other; at different altitudes, different speeds, as the light fails and the breeze comes up and the rain spatters on rustling leaves. Then one by one, at last, they begin to settle, then drop from view. With a last flutter, a thought settles on its perch and is quiet. On a rooftop perhaps, or in your wrist, in your throat. Another joins the first, and another. Thoughts fluffing their feathers before falling still. Perhaps one last squawk – then silence. Until, huddled together on their wire, between your ears, they lose definition, merge into each other; become a single pool of feathery shadow, deep shadow in the darkness, one layer beneath another, beneath others, as eyes close behind closed eyelids, watching by still deeper eyes, and the mind at last discovers itself transparent; the mind is finally still and clear as clear water, and from top to toe the body brims with transparent wordless mind the way a glass held between steady hands in the porticoed chiaroscuro of a sizzling afternoon in Seville might brim with transparent water around the dark secret of the black fig.* (pp 280-281)

(*a reference to the Velázquez painting The Waterseller of Seville discussed elsewhere in the book.)

Dhamma

Corners to turn
pathways to follow
life upheavals
threading light
threading heavy
in the midday
of hope
in the midnight
of failures
when tired

of chasing dreams
a light turns
a fire ignites
a star guides
the mind calms
attachments abandoned
body resting
the Dhamma is in the heart.

Beatriz Copello

Submitted by Caroline Lurie with kind permission of Michale Leunig

Dhamma Blossoms

Mules are good animals when trained; even
better are well trained Sind horses and great elephants.
Best among men is one with a well trained mind. No animal
can take you to nirvana; only a well trained mind
can lead you to this untrodden land

Dhammapada verses 322-323

News from Wingello

Noel Pearson, coordinator for building maintenance reports:

Building maintenance is progressing. In June we had a working bee where we managed to;

* Finish painting the shrine room, after Bhante's hard work removing wallpaper etc.
* Carried out some repairs to roof and gutter.
* Started removing the cupboards in dormitory in preparation for carpeting.
* Did some sanding of windows for re-priming and then painting plus a general clean up.

A big thank you to Lachlan, Samantha, Maya, Alex and Lily....(and those that I missed).

Lachlan had a brainwave to cover up the old fascias with colorbond fascia. This work has now been completed and will save much ongoing maintenance. Thank you Lachlan!

July work has been limited due to time constraints, the shorter days and of course, the weather. We hope to organise another working bee day in August, when we will try and guarantee some warm sunshine!

Fran Poulton, our coordinator for garden maintenance tells us:

The Southern Highlands is a chilly place to be in winter, so July and August working bees have been cancelled, however in June Alex, Michael, Caroline and her sister and Gus joined me for a day of dibbling in the front paddock removing blackberry seedlings and I think we should have blackberries under control by the end of 2012.

Plans are also being developed for around the house and the gardens

The machinery shed has been cleared, cleaned and tidied, chainsaws serviced and ready for spring and summer clearing, and thanks to some very generous donations, we have been able to purchase some much needed garden tools.

Ron and I met the Wingecarribee Shire Fire Mitigation Officer and inspected the property. We discussed safety requirements and a report and recommendations are being prepared.

Last weekend we had a wander around the property and following the creek, found the most beautiful waterfall. I plan to develop a track to it so we can all enjoy this beautiful, peaceful place.

Mindfulness in Everyday Life

Gathas are a rich and beautiful aid to help us remain mindful during the course of a busy day. Why not try writing your own as to help with your mindfulness practice? If you have written a gatha, why not share with friends to assist them. We would be pleased to publish verses members have written in the Newsletter.

It can be difficult to find time in a busy day or week to practice meditation, but something we do everyday is walk and this can become our meditation at any time of day. Thich Nhat Hanh gives us these beautiful words that can accompany our mindful walking.

The mind can go in a thousand directions

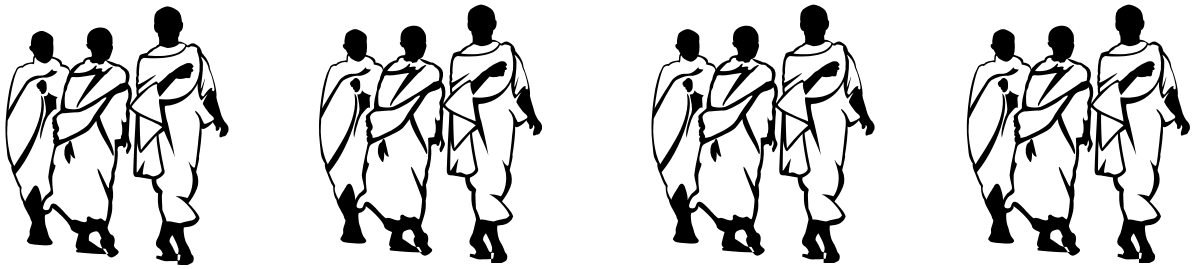
But on this beautiful path, I will walk in peace

With each step, a gentle wind blows

With each step, a flower blooms.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Present Moment Wonderful Moment



FOOD FAIR 2011

ANOTHER VERY SUCCESSFUL FOOD FAIR

Thanks to everyone for another very successful Food Fair and especially to our Food Fair Coordinator, Vincent Loh for another great job of organisation and to Saw Gaik Chong for coordinating the food stalls. Far from getting easier, the job of organising the Food Fair got even more complicated this year with new health and safety requirements from Hornsby Council and the Food Authority. Thanks to Vincent liaising with the Council safety officer, and borrowing equipment like fire extinguishers and rubber mats from members and other Buddhist groups, we were able to meet all the new safety requirements.

With a record crowd the Food Fair grossed almost $22,000. Virtually all of this is profit due to the generous donations of ingredients and all of the highly skilled labour of our cooks and stall workers but some expenses such as the hire of the community centre have still to be paid.

Thanks to all the volunteers who contributed so much to the success of the Food Fair and to all the customers who came to eat, enjoy the music (thanks Bruce and Jerry!) and catch up with friends.

TO BEG IN HOLY ROBES

To beg;
in holy robes
Elevating
in common clothes
Humiliating

A bald head;
in holy robes
noble
in common clothes
Alopecia

To lecture on emptiness;
in holy robes
Profound
in common clothes
Deranged

A thought inside a doctrine
Vanity
A thought without a thinker
Boundless

To publicly meditate;
in holy robes
Sacred
in common clothes
Homeless

Phillip Porter
Buddhist Conference
Sydney 1-2 May 2010

Donations

You may or may not realise that Sangha Lodge is **solely funded** from your donations.

Following the teaching of the Buddha, we do not charge for teachings or meditation evenings, preferring instead to rely on our members' generosity. Unfortunately, this often means a shortfall when it comes to meeting our weekly expenses from the donation box on a Wednesday night.

It would be much easier for the Centre to function if we were able to rely on regular donations from more members and guests of the centre.

One easy way to arrange for funds to be regularly transferred is via Internet Banking. Most Banks now offer a 'pay anyone' service whereby you are able to set up a regular monthly transfer to any nominated account. If you would like to set up this kind of regular donation to Sangha Lodge you will need the following account information: **Bank:** St George **BSB#:** 112 879 **Account#:** 131328823
Account Name: Association of Engaged Buddhists.

If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to the Building Fund please make your direct transfer to the following account:
Bank: St George **BSB:** 112-879 **Account Number:** 430589986
Account Name: Association of Engaged Buddhists
In order that we can budget our funds effectively and where appropriate supply you with a receipt for tax purposes we would appreciate it if you would email office@engagedbuddhists.org.au with the details of your regular transfer or tax deductible donation.
Your Dana (generosity) is greatly appreciated by the many people who come to the centre or are served by it in the wider community (hospitals, hospices and private visits by the Sangha).

Please help, **even a small monthly donation can make a big difference to Sangha Lodge.**

Association Membership: If you would like to become a member of the Association and thus receive this newsletter (if you don't already!), please fill in a membership form and leave it with a Committee member. You can pick one up from Sangha Lodge the next time you visit, or ring our office and get one posted to you. **Membership is due for renewal each September and costs $30/year**.

The next issue of One Heart-One Mind will be published in October 2011.

Sender:
The Association of Engaged Buddhists
Sangha Lodge
20 Victoria St
LEWISHAM NSW 2049