

Santi Forest Monastery Inc.



ANNUAL REPORT

For the year ending 30 June 2010



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MISSION

To bring peace, happiness and liberation to the world through the Buddha's teachings.

OBJECTIVES

To study the Buddha's teachings, with a special emphasis on those teachings that are common to all Buddhist traditions.

To build a community of the four-fold assembly — bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, laymen and laywomen — based on the consensual, principled and egalitarian model of the Vinaya.

To encourage and support the practice of meditation in seclusion, with the aim of liberation from suffering.

Year in Review

Special Events

Vassa

Each year on the full moon day in the month of July Theravada monasteries all around the world enter their traditional rains retreat. It is a period of three months within which the monastic community stays in one place and concentrates on solitude, meditation and contemplation of the dhamma. This year we came together — a community of around seventeen people, sangha and lay — to spend this time at Santi.



End of Vassa 2009

Vinaya Seminar

The Australian Sangha Association (ASA) organised a Vinaya (monastic code) Seminar at the Monastery in February 2010. It was well attended by both monks and nuns from all schools of Buddhism.



Vinaya seminar held at Santi — February 2010

Vassa Open Days

We held three open days during the three months of Vassa, where people toured the monastery, shared our dana (the main meal of the day) and listened to dhamma. Much the same as any other day at Santi.



Parliament House

On 15 June 2009 Bhante Sujato visited Parliament House in Canberra, as ASA's representative, to attend the formal ceremony of acceptance of the Dhammapada as a sacred Buddhist text by the Australian Parliament. A copy of the Dhammapada has been added to the Despatch Box which sits on the central table in front of the Prime Minister.



Parliament house — June 2009

Kathina

The Kathina — the traditional robes offering ceremony to the sangha — is held at the end of Vassa (the rains retreat). This ceremony is the one day of the year that the sangha gathers to receive requisites offered by the lay community.



Ordinations

In February 2010 we held an ordination ceremony in the cave for two samaneri (female novices). It was very well attended by family and friends and the Buddhist community.



Anagarika

Throughout the year we accepted three new anagarikas for training to become a monastic.

Easter Retreat

Over the Easter long weekend Bhante Sujato led his annual metta retreat at Brahma Kumaris at Wilton. Forty participants sat the four day retreat, practising Loving Kindness meditation guided by Bhante Sujato.

Samaneri ordination — February 2010

AABCAP Retreat

Bhante Sujato led a ten day retreat for the Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Physcotherapists (AABCAP) at Nan Tien Temple in Wollongong.



Weekly Events

At Bundanoon

Sutta classes — weekly study of Buddhist scriptures attended by the monastery's residents and open to all.

Dhamma talks — weekly talks by Bhante Sujato open to all, recorded and available for download from our website.

Meditation and chanting — weekly group meditation session open to all.

At North Sydney

Dhamma talks — Friday night talks given weekly by Bhante Sujato in Sydney for Buddhist followers who cannot travel to the monastery.



Kathina Ceremony — end of Vassa 2009



President's Report

The 2010 Annual General Meeting marks the end of another remarkably busy yet reassuringly tranquil year, and it is my great privilege to present the 2010 Annual Report on behalf of the Committee.

To be able to look back on the fruits of the sincere practice offered by the four-fold sangha is truly inspiring. Over my five years on the Committee (this year as President; previously as Treasurer), I have seen how Bhante Sujato's drive and vision as Abbot have transformed an already beautiful property with one monastic (himself) and one lay resident into a thriving and committed community of up to twenty residents. The impressive facilities we now have for practice, living and learning in Bundanoon are a beautiful interpretation of the Dhamma, and I offer my sincere thanks on behalf of the committee and the wider community to Bhante Sujato for his energy and commitment.

Santi Forest Monastery is also privileged to actively engage in the ordination of women practitioners in the Theravadin tradition. On 22 October 2009, the first Theravada bhikkhuni ordination in Australia was performed in Western Australia: this was the first bhikkhuni ordination in the Thai Forest Tradition anywhere in the world. Santi Forest Monastery has been well known as a centre for support of bhikkhunis internationally since 2006, with an active role being played by Bhante Sujato for several years prior to that. In 2010, Santi Forest Monastery was host to the ordination of its third and fourth novice nuns. Despite the strong reaction against such ordinations, Santi Forest Monastery will continue to actively encourage and support candidates interested in ordination, regardless of their gender.

Santi Forest Monastery's financial position is healthy: the financial and management practices of the committee tend towards the conservative and we are governed by our constitution, a copy of which is available from our website www.santi.org. As a registered charity, we come under the auspices of several government bodies, and we are careful to ensure our compliance to safeguard the reputation and continuity of the monastery. Our committee meetings are held at least quarterly. I warmly encourage our members and supporters to come along to committee meetings both to offer their points of view and to take up a role, no matter how modest, in supporting Santi Forest Monastery and its wider community.

The act of giving, dana, is a cornerstone of Buddhist practice and I never cease to be amazed by the generosity offered with no expectation of recognition or reward:

- To my fellow committee members, thank you for your time, your enthusiasm, your technical expertise and your humour
- To the Sangha and resident community, thank you for your sincere practice and shining spirit of renunciation
- To the many volunteers, thank you for your dedication in tackling the enormous variety of tasks that go with maintaining our community
- To our long-term contractors, Helene and Patrick, thank you for going that extra mile
- To the many hundred donors of money, food and worldly goods, thank you for embracing the practice of dana so whole-heartedly. The committee also thanks the Buddhist Council of NSW for its support and the Department of Environment and Climate Change for a grant
- To the original custodians of the land, thank you for your care and original spirit of the dhamma: we pay our respects to elders past and present.

My final thanks are due to our Spiritual Director, Bhante Sujato: a deep bow of gratitude for walking the way and teaching us how it's done.

Metta

Nicola Le Couteur, President

Spiritual Director's Report

Introduction

Santi Forest Monastery is a place like no other. It combines rugged seclusion with technology; simplicity with sophistication; tradition with innovation. It doesn't always do these things perfectly, but what is remarkable is that it does it at all. For seven years now we have been growing, taking on challenges, changing, and adapting. In all of this I believe we have kept true to our vision: to find a way to embody Dhamma that is deeply relevant and authentic in today's world.

We can mention only some specifics in a report like this. But we can't capture the day to day spirit, the kindness and heart that is shown by so many people. I am so proud that we have helped create a space that allows people to come, to be, and to grow in their own way.

Santi is a charity, and offers all its services for free, every day supplying people with accommodation, with all that implies, like food, electricity, transport, telephones, and the rest. Santi is remote, and it is not easy for the Buddhist community to bring and offer the requisites on a daily basis. Nevertheless, somehow it happens. This vassa we have had the meal brought virtually every day. So generous are our donors that we have been able to also supply other charities, regularly taking excess supplies to the local 'Rosnel' hostel. Some of our donors now bring food for us, and also bring extra supplies for the hostel. When I heard this, I saw it as a measure of the generosity that has always characterised Santi's community.

Developments/Future

The major project completed this year was the installation of two large water tanks for rainwater near the main house, as well as two composting toilets. This was largely funded by a grant from the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water of NSW. Congratulations are especially due to Ayya Analaya, who did the grant application and managed the project. In addition to this there were a number of minor upgrades to facilities, such as roads, etc. Next year promises to be a quiet time as far as building is concerned. There is a 'long tail' of smallish jobs to be completed at the main house and cave. In the medium term our major priority is better accommodation. I intend to look to putting together a DA for perhaps twelve kutis. When this is ready we can build the kutis at our convenience.

People

For the past couple of years, Santi has had a regular community of around fifteen to twenty people. For the vassa there were three monks and four nuns. There continues to be a strong interest in ordination at Santi, and we may have a novice and a bhikkhuni ordination in the next year.

As the community grows and evolves, we are working to establish the community along the lines of the Buddha's original vinaya. The community as a whole agrees on a certain person to fulfil a given role, such as Kitchen Manager, IT or Maintenance. Each officer has a set of duties that are agreed on by the community. Within their sphere, the community officer has authority. In this way, the community itself becomes self-organizing, and my role as abbot will diminish over time.

Teaching

We have continued to offer teachings on a regular basis for the resident community. In addition to the three months meditation retreat in the vassa, we had a three month study period, during which time there were classes on most weekdays. We looked at Buddhist scriptures, vinaya, history, Pali, as well as meditation. The community takes a keen interest in learning and discussion, and have invited several guest teachers to contribute. This year I also introduced regular meditation interviews throughout the year.

Publications/internet

We have moved most of Santi's web presence to the free and open source Wordpress platform, hosted on Supergreen, a one hundred percent renewable energy web host. There is a new Santipada website, which hosts versions of many of my writings. Over the next year I hope to complete this, with all my books available both online and print-on-demand.

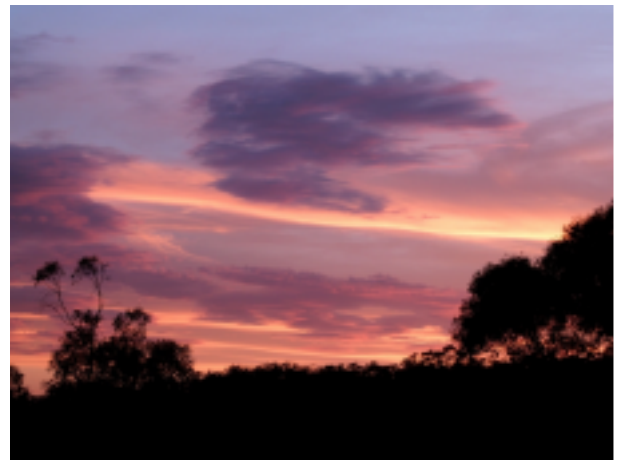
Outreach

Our teachings in Sydney moved to the Well-Aware-Ness Centre in Ridge St., North Sydney. The talks have been well organised and supported, and my congratulations and thanks to the organisers, in particular Alex, Renee and Nilushi. For the first time the organisers decided to keep the talks going through the rains retreat, which will hopefully give more continuity to the group.

Santi helped organise a major talk by Ajahn Brahm, which attracted around 1000 people. In addition we organised a philosophy night, which raised over \$1000 for the Buddhist Library's Project Cambodia.

This past year has seen a continuation in my work in interfaith and the environment. I continue to be an active member and contributor to the following organizations: Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations; Australian Religious Response to Climate Change; Faith Ecology Network; Australian Sangha Association; Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils; Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists; Australian Association of Buddhist Studies. In addition I have been taking part in regular interfaith dialogue, and continue to contribute what I can to the health of Australia's religious culture.

Bhante Sujato, Spiritual Director



Sights of Santi Forest Monastery



Treasurer's Report

Fundraising has been very successful this year mostly due to our supporters who put countless hours and much generosity into supporting the community and teachings of Santi Forest Monastery.

Around half of the funds raised were spent on improving and extending the residential and teaching facilities. The meditation cave is almost complete and is now a fully functioning space used for teaching, ceremony and contemplation. The upstairs sala has been finished, complete with an eco friendly under floor heating system. We are striving to make the monastery buildings as environmentally friendly as possible to minimise the impact upon our beautiful surroundings and to honour our ongoing commitment to sustainable living.

In November 2009 we were successful in obtaining a grant from the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The grant was for \$28,766 and allowed the monastery to purchase and install two composting toilets and install a new rainwater tank system designed to increase our water storage capacity and reduce our mains water consumption. This is a great cost saving initiative and benefits our natural environment. Thank you to Ayya Analaya for the many hours she spent on the grant application.

The interest free loan was fully repaid in March 2010 a full twelve months ahead of the repayment schedule. We continue to maintain a reserve of at least \$20,000 in the V2 bank account, to act as a buffer for residential living costs in case of unforeseen circumstances.

The total funds in our bank accounts as at 30 June 2010 was \$39,672, being sufficient monies to allow the monastery to support the day-to-day requirements of the sangha during the rains without the need for any fund-raising activity.

The everyday costs of running the monastery are in line with the increase in and stability of the residential community. The comparatively low costs we incur in running the monastery are due to a large body of supporters who provide food and everyday living needs to the resident community. I do not know a way to acknowledge their generosity in the numbers presented in these financial statements: please know that we are grateful for the continued sustenance you provide.

Finance team: thank you

I thank those residents and supporters who put many hours into the routine administration, accounting and compliance requirements of our monastery. The work is often thankless but wholly necessary given the statutory and regulatory environment we co-exist with. My thanks to Helene, our bookkeeper, who continues to offer a professional and reliable service. I would also like to offer our deepest gratitude to Nicola Le Couteur CA, who thoroughly prepared our 2010 financial statements for the audit, free of charge.

I welcome your questions and feedback on these financial statements and other compliance or administrative matters. Please feel free to contact me or our bookkeeper Helene at santifinance@gmail.com.

Pat Denny, Treasurer

Our community

Bhante Sujato — Abbot and Spiritual Director

Monks and nuns reside at the monastery to be trained in the forest meditation tradition with aspiration to realise enlightenment. Monks and nuns follow the vinaya, the code of conduct for Buddhist monastics. The vinaya also sets out organizational principles to guide how a sangha community should be run.

The community at Santi is a mixed one, where the male and female residents have separate dwelling areas, but come together for meals, teachings and work.



Committee Members

The property in Bundanoon is wholly owned by Santi Forest Monastery Incorporated, a not-for-profit charity. The management is carried out by a committee that is elected each year. The committee meets at least quarterly, and is charged with ensuring the financial compliance and security of the monastery.

Nicola Le-Couteur — President

I really enjoy being involved with all the diverse members of the Santi Forest Monastery community, both in terms of developing a meaningful meditation practice and also learning how to live life to the full. I have served this year as President and previously as Treasurer (2005–2009). I live in Sydney with my family and I run my own suburban practice as a Chartered Accountant.



Pat Denny — Treasurer

I have been a supporter of Santi since 2004. Since moving to Bundanoon in 2006, with my husband James, I have been involved with Santi Forest Monastery in a voluntary capacity, mainly in running and organising the day to day financial affairs. I have been on the committee since 2008 and became Treasurer in 2009 and continue to serve in that area.



Jacqui McGirr — Secretary

As a new member of Santi's committee I am appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to Santi's welfare. Considering matters as diverse as limestone roadbase and the success of the vinaya seminars is a special way to be connected to such a wonderful dhamma community. As a side project, it was a pleasure to be of some assistance to Bhante Sujato, via hours of discussion, in his rethinking and reworking of Santi's websites.



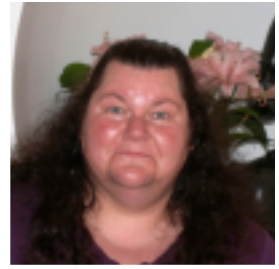
Bill Stanley — Committee Member

I was privileged to first come to Santi with Venerable Santithito for the samaneri ordination of Ayya Mahacitta on June 2009. Since then I have regularly attended the Monastery, including being fortunate enough to spend a long weekend on retreat living as part of the community. At the last AGM I was selected to be a member of the committee.



Alexandra Zachary — Committee Member

I have been coming to Santi since 2005. This was my first experience of Theravadan Buddhism and has been a sanctuary and source of inspiration ever since. I have joined the committee in 2008 and have served on and off since then.



In Memory of Darryl Gradwell

Our good friend Darryl Gradwell passed away in January 2010. His death was sudden, and came as a shock to all of us. Darryl was a long time supporter and became a committee member of Santi just before his death. He really did embody the idea of simplicity — in his lack of possessions, his love of nature and the direct way he communicated. Even his art work had a very unadorned, direct quality. In all his time here at Santi he was totally devoted to practice, and was a loved and respected member of our little community.



Volunteers

Our volunteer community consists of people staying at the monastery and visitors who help in a variety of ways. This includes kitchen, gardening, painting, cleaning, general maintenance work or office/computer work.

One of the main ways to volunteer is to offer dana — the traditional offer of food for the Sangha. We thank everybody who has donated their time, money and expertise, without the support of the lay community the monastery would not be here.

We also thank the volunteers that coordinate the Friday night talks in North Sydney to enable Sydney residents to attend talks held by Bhante Sujato.

Also a big thankyou to Du Minh Toan and Tran Xuan Nhuy who together with Tam-Ngan and Gia-Hieu have made and installed the beautiful hemp curtains in our main sala.

Consultants

Helene Robson

Helene is Santi's bookkeeper since March 2006 and is responsible for processing all of the monastery's financial transactions. Her experience includes working in various financial, accounting and administrative roles for government departments. Helene lives near Santi, with her husband and two children.



Patrick Fitzgerald

Patrick started working for Santi at 2004 and since then has been involved with all of our building projects. He has supervised the excavation and renovation of Santi's caves and the renovation of the main building. Patrick was also the driving force behind the installation of the solar panels.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to both Helene and Patrick for lending us a helping hand far beyond the call of duty.

Source of Funds

Santi Forest Monastery is almost entirely dependent on donations, consistent with the Buddhist faith and philosophy that community interactions built on goodwill and mutual generosity lead to enrichment for all.

Source of Donations

During 2009/10 financial year the monastery received donations from a number of different sources:

- Sydney Vietnamese community have continued to be most generous with their support, and we acknowledge and thank the hard work of Gai Hieu in coordinating these donations.
- Bundanoon dana box — donations given by visitors to Santi Forest Monastery.
- North Sydney dana box — donations given by attendees of the weekly Friday night dhamma talks held in North Sydney.
- Nationally — Santi Forest Monastery is supported by a broad cross-section of Australia's multicultural society.
- International — Santi Forest Monastery draws support internationally via 'Our Community' website throughout the year (ourcommunity.org.au). Our Community is an organisation dedicated to assisting community groups collect donations by providing, at low cost, credit card payment and basic accounting services. There is a link on our website to enable people to make donations easily and safely.
- In accordance with the vinaya the monastery does not use its funds to buy food. All of our food is donated by our supporters and the sangha receives food from our Bundanoon supporters every Sunday on alms rounds.



Fundraising Events

Renounceathon was an initiative by a Santi supporter, founded on the idea that we can make a better world by consuming less. The idea was that participants could register and commit to giving up something they didn't need for one month commencing from New Years Day. Renounceathon was a web-based interactive fundraiser which allowed sponsors to support participants by offering donations in recognition of their effort. Renounceathon was a successful blend of practice and practicality, raising a net total of \$6,263 at a modest cost of \$382.

General and Building Fund

Santi Forest Monastery receives donations into two different bank accounts; the everyday bank account and the building fund: both of these funds are listed on our website. Funds donated into the everyday bank account are primarily for day to day expenses and are not tax deductible to Australian resident taxpayers. The building fund is a Deductible Gift Recipient Fund approved by the Australian Taxation Office and so donations greater than \$2 into this fund are tax deductible to Australian resident taxpayers. The majority of donations into the building fund in 2010 have been spent on the completion of the large meditation cave (\$28,284) and the installation of hot water heating system in the upstairs sala (\$10,079).

Authority to Fundraise

As a member of the Buddhist Council of NSW we are vested with the authority to fundraise, for which we are grateful.

Climate Change Fund Grant 2009/2010

In our striving for a sustainable living environment, we have designed a system which will enable us to reduce our water usage on one hand and increase our rainwater harvesting on the other. Our system included installing composting toilets and new rain water tanks which collect rain water of a larger roof area.

This project was made possible by a grant of \$28,766 received from the NSW Climate Change Fund, managed by Department of Environment and Climate Change. An additional \$5000 from the building fund was used to complete the project.



Rainwater tanks

The new rainwater tank system is expected to double our rain water harvesting capability and increase our water storage capacity by four times. To reach that goal we intend to connect the roof of the shed and the new garage to the tanks. We are committed to completing this by the end of the year.



Composting Toilets

The grant enabled us to purchase two state of the art composting toilets and cover some of the installation and labour costs.



Environmental Benefits

The new tanks and associated systems will enable us to use sixty percent less mains water a year. More recent water bills suggest we have already cut consumption drastically and that we might even become self sufficient for water as long as we get the rain.

Composting toilets will further reduce water consumption and will reduce pressure on our aging blackwater septic treatment system. This will also decrease the amount of effluent being discharged into the Santi forest environment and waterways.

