



New Zealand Buddhist Council

Our last Bulletin to you was in April when New Zealand was in level 4 lockdown and the number of cases of Covid-19 was growing daily. Much has happened since then, with the personal and economic impacts of the pandemic hitting home. Many of us have friends and family overseas, and connections with temples or Dharma centres abroad. Most of them are in far more challenging circumstances than those which we face here.

During the lockdown many of us had to learn how to make use of a variety of online tools. We heard about members who are using Zoom, Jitsi, or Google Meet for online meetings, and Mixlr, Vimeo, Youtube, or Facebook for live streaming of teachings and ceremonies.

We attended our Buddhist Council's AGM on 23 May with Zoom. This had the advantage of no travel to attend. Before the AGM, executive committee members phoned representatives of each of our member organisations to learn about how you have been coping recently, hearing also about what some of you would like to see for the future of NZBC. Many would like to see NZBC continue to grow our membership and become a stronger voice nationally.

Many centres are dealing with challenges to maintain the immigration status of teachers or monastics who they have helped to come here from other countries. For those making applications to Immigration services, our [Advice on Immigration for Religious Workers](#) and our letters of support have been helpful. When the opportunity arises in future, we will again give policy makers in

Government our feedback, although we do not expect any fast progress on this, not until after the election, perhaps sometime in 2021. We value the opinions you have shared with us, and welcome hearing about any new experiences of immigration matters.

Since lockdown restrictions were eased Pimmy Takdhada (Exec member and webmaster) and I have visited members in the Southern part of Te Wai Pounamu. <https://www.buddhistcouncil.org.nz/dharma-on-a-journey-to-the-south/>

Representatives of two member centres have given us information that we will edit into articles for forthcoming newsletters and the "featured temple" page which will be coming soon on our website. Do get in touch if you have had an interesting change or new development that you would like to share with the Buddhist community around the country!

By sharing stories we hope that will be part of getting to know each other better. Do read on to learn about great initiatives by Buddhist communities around Aotearoa and more about Buddhist Council.

Yesterday I was pleased to receive a reminder from Tibetan Buddhists that it was Chökhör Düchen in the Tibetan calendar, the festival day marking the Buddha's First Teaching. The auspiciousness of that day gave a great opportunity to focus practice for the benefit of all beings in this difficult time.

For Theravada communities now undertaking Vassa (Rains Retreat) our sincere wishes for conducive conditions and great practice during this period.

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1. About our AGM – 23 May 2020

Each year the AGM is a chance for member representatives to connect, receive reporting from the officers of the society and vote on issues requiring the consideration of members. The AGM confirmed the Executive Committee (Exec) for the current year. All three seats for each Yana are filled with nominees from members. The Exec has since met (also on Zoom) to appoint officers. Ecie Hursthouse is our Vice Chair, Simon Harrison is Treasurer, Derek LeDayn is Secretary and I continue in the role of Chair.

The others presently serving on Exec are Gamini Settinayake, Pimmy Takdhada, Sally McAra, Chris Krageloh, and Peter Small.

The main points of our AGM - <https://www.buddhistcouncil.org.nz/about-our-2020-agm/> - This includes tributes to two previous Executive Committee members who did not stand for election this year, thanking Rukman Wagachchi and Jun Kim for their extensive work for the Council.

2. Religious instruction or religious education in schools - this online survey is open.

The Religious Diversity Centre recently launched a survey seeking the views of New Zealanders on religion in schools. The findings will be passed on to the Minister of Education as he considers whether, and how to shift the emphasis of religion in schools from religious instruction to religious education/religious studies. Participants remain anonymous. The survey closes on 28 July. http://vuw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4T2uCCny0tM57eZ.

NZBC decided to circulate the survey as it may advance public debate and awareness of the issues. Participants are not being asked to identify which faith they are from, so how the output will be analysed is not yet known to us.

3. Dhamma centre visits in the South of the South Island
<https://www.buddhistcouncil.org.nz/dhamma-on-a-journey-to-the-south/>
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