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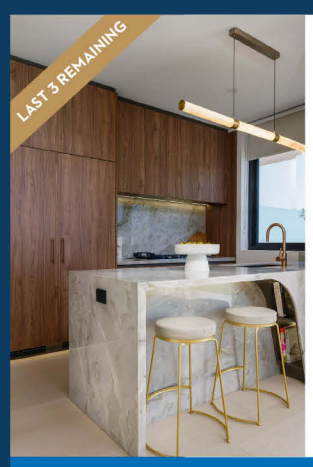


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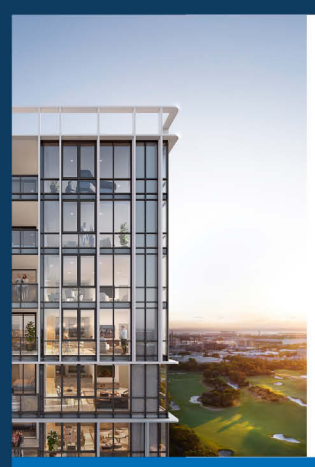


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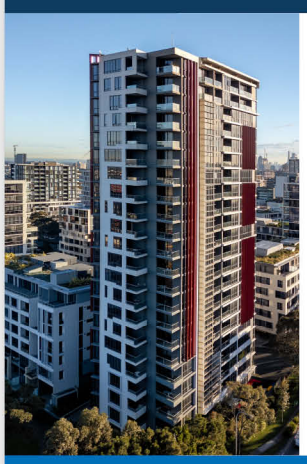


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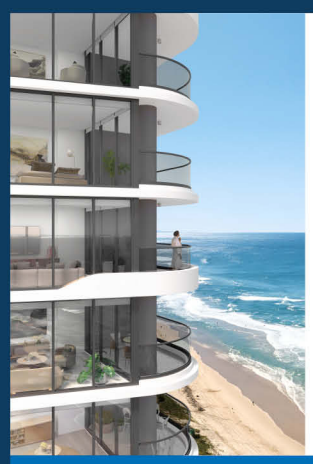


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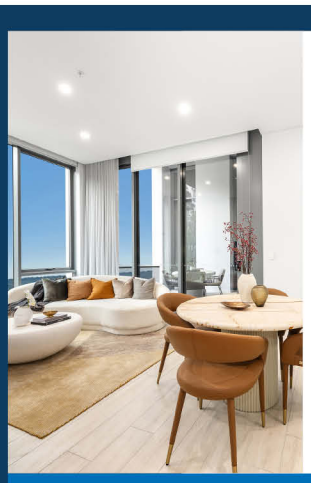
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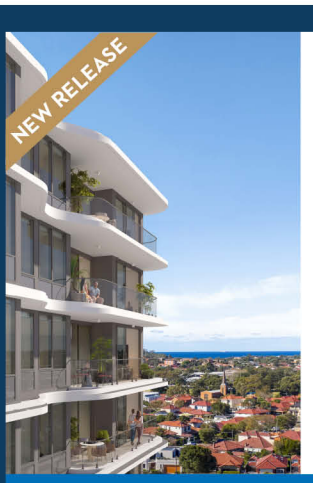


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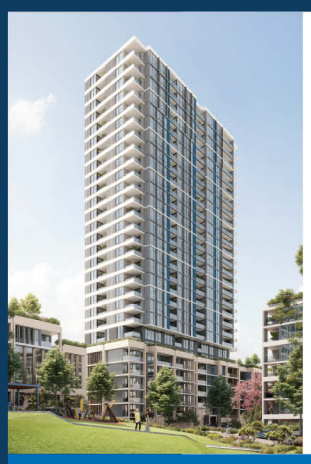


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EDITOR'S NOTE

A Year That Quietly Changed Us



Dear Readers,

Australian summer carries a kind of softness that arrives just when people need it. The days stretch, the air warms, and families move across the country in steady streams. Suitcases roll through airports in both directions, some filled with gifts for relatives in India, others packed for reunions in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and beyond. After months filled with Diwali gatherings, cricket nights, end-of-year school events and a constant hum of social life, many are saying the same thing: the year went by too quickly. With more screens, more festivals, more entertainment and more technology shaping each month, life has felt crowded. Christmas, for many, is the first real moment to slow down.

The stories we told this year carried that theme in quiet but powerful ways. There were people learning how to belong, how to speak up, how to raise children in two cultures, how to care for others, and how to stay grounded in a world moving very fast. A volunteer firefighter stepping away from his IT desk the moment the pager sounded. A Monash researcher examining why South Asian women struggle to access contraception. Cadets in Salisbury training for India's growing aviation needs. Students questioning whether their degrees match the future they are walking into. Families in Melbourne finding light and comfort in traditions carried from Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Amritsar and Shillong. Taken one by one, the stories were personal. Seen together, they showed how firmly the South Asian community is now woven into Australia, from classrooms and research centres to emergency volunteers, creative work and civic life.

Christmas brings this spirit of connection into focus. Across the country, cities are preparing for the season in ways that reflect their own character. Sydney's Carols in the Domain will draw families with picnic blankets and children running between food stalls. Melbourne's Capitol Theatre will screen festive classics and Christmas Square at Fed Square will glow long after sunset. The Gold Coast will host fireworks and canal parades, while Brisbane's Riverstage will fill with crowds for carols. Parramatta will welcome seniors and those doing it tough with free Christmas gatherings, with the message from Lord Mayor Cr Martin Zaiter simple and heartfelt: that everyone should have a chance to feel the magic of Christmas. These celebrations sit alongside smaller community dinners, church events, community gatherings and neighbourhood barbecues that give the season its warmth.

This feeling of togetherness sits alongside one more story that marked the end of our year. As Sahana Raghuraman prepares for her arangetram in Chennai this January, her journey brings together years of discipline, family support and artistic devotion. Born in New Zealand, trained under Dr Dhanya Sreekanth and later guided by Dr Bhuvana Kannan, she held on through a move to Melbourne and the challenge of online learning. Her performance at Rani Seethai Hall will be a moment shaped by her guru's lineage, her parents' scientific journeys and her own persistence across borders.

Summer in Australia is framed by cricket, and with the Ashes continuing to dominate screens and conversations, the season feels familiar and comforting. It is a time of reunion, whether that happens at crowded dining tables here or in family homes in Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kochi or Delhi. The sense of movement is constant, which makes safety just as important as celebration. With more people on the roads and near the water, it is a good time to take care, drive patiently, keep watch at beaches and pools, and give yourself room to rest.

If there is one mood that ties the year together, it is this: everyone is trying to keep pace with a world that moves faster each month. That is exactly why this season matters. It gives people permission to pause, reset and spend time with those who steady them.

We wish all our readers a peaceful break, a safe holiday, a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year. May the season bring rest, good company and the kind of quiet joy that carries you gently into 2026.

Best wishes,
SIDDHARTH SURESH

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Christmas in Australia 2025

A festive guide to celebrations across the nation

1. The Salvation Army's Carols in the Domain—Sydney

Saturday 20 December 2025 Sydney's most-loved Christmas tradition returns for its 43rd year. Tens of thousands gather in The Domain and millions tune in live on Channel 7 and 7plus. Pre-show entertainment begins at 12pm, the red carpet begins at 5:15pm and the main event starts at 7:45pm. A night of carols under the stars, fireworks, family fun and a star-studded line-up.

Get tickets: https://events.ticketbooth.com.au/tickets/carols-in-the-domain25

2. Festive Flicks Light Up The Capitol Theatre This December

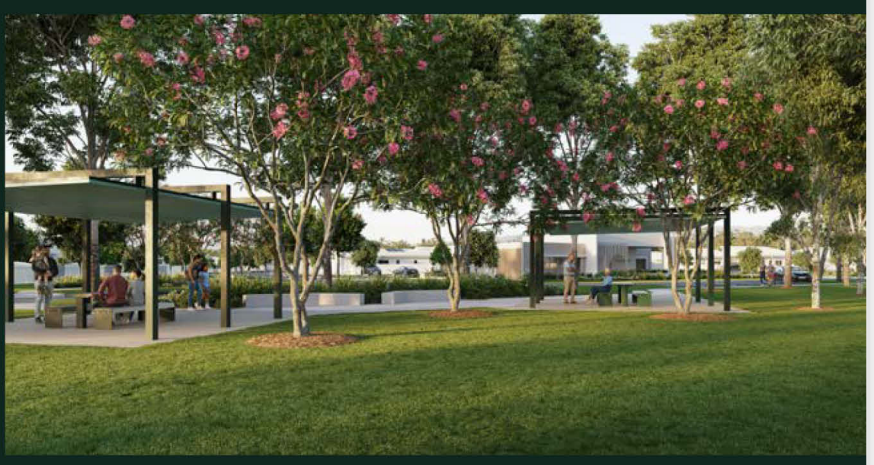
Melbourne's iconic Capitol Theatre (113 Swanston St, Melbourne) will transform into a festive cinema this December, screening much-loved Christmas films across four special sessions. Catch *The Santa Clause* on Saturday 6 December, *Home Alone* on Saturday 13 December, *Arthur Christmas* on Saturday 20 December, and *Elf* on Sunday 21 December. Each film runs 1pm–3pm, with doors opening 30 minutes before the show. Tickets are priced between $5 and $8, and the *Elf* screening will include Open Captions TURN TO #10



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<CONTINUED FROM #8> to support accessibility.

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3. Bubble Show for Christmas—Melbourne

A playful burst of festive fun arrives at The Capitol, 113 Swanston Street, Melbourne, with Bubble Show for Christmas—a magical family performance filled with laughter and spectacular bubble artistry. Join Dr Bubble and Milkshake the Bubble Clown in a joyful Christmas adventure where science meets imagination and bubble chaos takes over the stage. Designed for children aged 3–12, the show features breathtaking bubble displays and plenty of interactive moments to delight little audiences. All sessions include Auslan interpretation, and both performances on Wednesday 24 December are relaxed for those who prefer a more gentle sensory environment. Part of the City of Melbourne Christmas Festival, the event embraces accessibility and welcomes all families. Tickets are $5 for adults and children alike.

Dates & Times:

Tue 23 December: 1:30pm–2:30pm

Wed 24 December: 11:00am–12:00pm & 1:30pm–2:30pm

Location: The Capitol, 113 Swanston St, Melbourne 3000

Bookings: https://events.humanitix.com/bubble-show-for-christmas-2025

Perfect for kids, bubble lovers and holiday magic seekers.

4. Christmas Square—Melbourne

The heart of the city transforms into a festive wonderland as Christmas Square returns to Fed Square, illuminated by an iconic 17.5-metre Christmas tree and a dazzling program of light and sound shows. Families can wander through a candy cane- **<TURN TO #11>**

CONTINUED FROM #10 themed landscape, enjoy the vibrant atmosphere and take in one of Melbourne's most photographed holiday landmarks. Presented by the City of Melbourne in partnership with Fed Square, the event is proudly powered by 100% wind energy, bringing sustainable sparkle to the celebrations. Free and fully accessible, it's an open invitation to immerse yourself in the magic at any time of day.

Dates & Times:
Monday 1st December to Thursday 4 December, 9:30am–11:30pm

Location: Fed Square, Swanston St & Flinders St, Melbourne 3000

Price: Free

Bookings: Not required



5. A Christmas Carol—Melbourne

Step into the timeless world of Charles Dickens as A Christmas Carol returns to Melbourne, bringing Ebenezer Scrooge's emotional transformation to the stage in an uplifting and beautifully staged production. On one fateful Christmas Eve, Scrooge is confronted by four ghosts who guide him through haunting visions of his past, present and future—offering a powerful lesson about compassion, generosity and the true spirit of Christmas. A much-loved festive tradition for theatre-goers of all ages, this celebrated production promises atmosphere, wonder and a stirring reminder that it's never too late to change.

Dates & Times:
Tue 2 Dec—6:30pm–8:30pm
Wed 3 Dec—1:00pm–3:00pm & 6:00pm–8:00pm
Thu 4 Dec—7:00pm–9:00pm

Location: Comedy Theatre, 240 Exhibition St, Melbourne 3000

Tickets: From $79.90 to $179.90

Bookings: https://premier.ticketek.com.au/shows/show.aspx?sh=CHRISCAR25

6. Carols by Daylight—Melbourne

Join the festive spirit at Carols by Daylight, returning for its 18th year at Fed Square. This lively community celebration invites families and music lovers to enjoy a joyful Christmas sing-along and variety performance featuring the Hello Music Children's Orchestra and Choir, talented students from local Melbourne schools, Melbourne Uni's Biomedicine Students Orchestra, international concert pianist Warren Wills, the Hot Socks Big Band, and a special visit from Santa Claus. Hosted by Sam McLarty and Karen Kim, it's a bright and heart-warming afternoon designed for all ages.

Date & Time:
Sunday 7 December—3:00pm–4:30pm

Location:
Federation Square—The Edge, Flinders St, Melbourne 3000

Tickets: From $22 to $49.50
Adult $39.50
Senior / Student / Concession / Children $22
Free for children under 5

Bookings: https://luma.com/98cmzgm3

7. Pasko sa Melbourne—Melbourne

Experience the joy of a Filipino Christmas at Pasko sa Melbourne, a vibrant, family- TURN TO #12







CONTINUED FROM #11 friendly celebration in the heart of the city. Visitors can join in parol (lantern) making, enjoy perya-style games, and watch colourful multicultural performances including Filipino folk dances and carols. The event also features live entertainment, interactive workshops, food stalls, and festive moments with Santa's gift-giving for children, culminating in a joyful Christmas Parade that unites the community in celebration.

Date & Time:
Friday 5 December—1:00pm–7:00pm

Location: C-D Sheds (Peel Street end), Queen Victoria Market, Queen St, Melbourne 3000

Price: Free

Bookings: Not required

8. Love Actually in Concert—Melbourne

Back by popular demand, Love Actually in Concert returns to Melbourne Town Hall, bringing the beloved holiday film to life with the Australian Stage Orchestra performing the iconic soundtrack live. Relive over 20 years of heartwarming stories, laughter, and festive romance as the film screens on the big screen, creating a magical holiday experience for couples, friends, and solo movie lovers alike. Guests are encouraged to don their favourite Christmas attire, sip, sing along, laugh, and maybe shed a joyful tear as the music and film combine for a truly memorable evening.

Dates & Times:
Sunday 21 December—3:30pm–5:30pm
Monday 22 December—2:00pm–4:00pm

Location: Melbourne Town Hall, 90/130 Swanston St, Melbourne 3000

Tickets: Adult / general $109

Bookings: https://loveactuallyliveinconcert.com/#buy-tickets

9. Victoria Chorale: O Magnum Mysterium Christmas Concert—Melbourne

Celebrate the TURN TO #13

❮CONTINUED FROM #12❯ wonder of Christmas with Victoria Chorale in their O Magnum Mysterium concert at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. This evocative performance explores the profound mystery of the Incarnation through masterful interpretations of J.S. Bach's Christmas Oratorio and other timeless works, alongside cherished carols with opportunities for audience participation. Collaborating with The Choir of St Andrews Brighton, Victoria's oldest and most distinguished choir, the evening promises a rich and moving musical experience to close the year in festive style.

Date & Time: Saturday 13 December—5:00pm–6:30pm

Location: St Paul's Cathedral, 200 Flinders St, Melbourne 3000

Tickets: Adult $70 | Student / Concession $35 | Children $20

Bookings: https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1461334

10. Floating Christmas Tree—Sydney

Sydney's first-ever Floating Christmas Tree returns to Darling Harbour! Standing 10 metres tall in Cockle Bay, the tree is adorned with dazzling baubles that shimmer in the sunlight.



As evening falls, the display transforms into a magical spectacle of lights, bringing a festive glow to the waterfront and creating a must-see holiday attraction for families, couples, and visitors alike.

Dates: Monday 1st December—Saturday 27 December 2025

Location: Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour, Sydney NSW 2000

Price: Free

Booking: Not required

11. Cockle Bay Christmas Spectacular—Sydney

Get ready for a splashing festive celebration at Darling Harbour! Santa makes a high-octane entrance on a jet ski, thrilling the crowd as elves soar on jet-packs above the sparkling waters.

Enjoy a lively marching band, a live DJ spinning summer tunes, and even a surprise Santa flash mob.

The event culminates in a spectacular fireworks display over Cockle Bay, creating a magical waterfront Christmas experience for families and visitors alike.

Date: Friday 6 December 2025 | 4pm–9pm

Location: Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour, Sydney NSW 2000

Price: Free

Booking: Not required

12. Mayor's Christmas Carols—Gold Coast

The City of Gold Coast's Mayor's Christmas Carols returns for its 14th year with two nights of festive cheer at HOTA. Enjoy live performances from Gold Coast pop star Ricki-Lee, toddler techno favourite Lenny Pearce, and the Looney Tunes Christmas Show, alongside a special visit from Santa. Each evening concludes with a breathtaking fireworks display, capping off a memorable celebration of music, family fun, and Christmas spirit.

Dates: Saturday 6 & Sunday 7 December 2025 | Gates open 4pm

Location: HOTA Outdoor Stage & Parklands, 135 Bundall Road, Surfers Paradise, QLD

Price: Free

Booking: Not required

13. Christmas Flicks & Fireworks—Gold Coast

Enjoy a coastal Christmas celebration at Surfers Paradise Beach with festive movies under the stars and fireworks lighting up the night sky. Arrive early to explore ❮TURN TO #14❯

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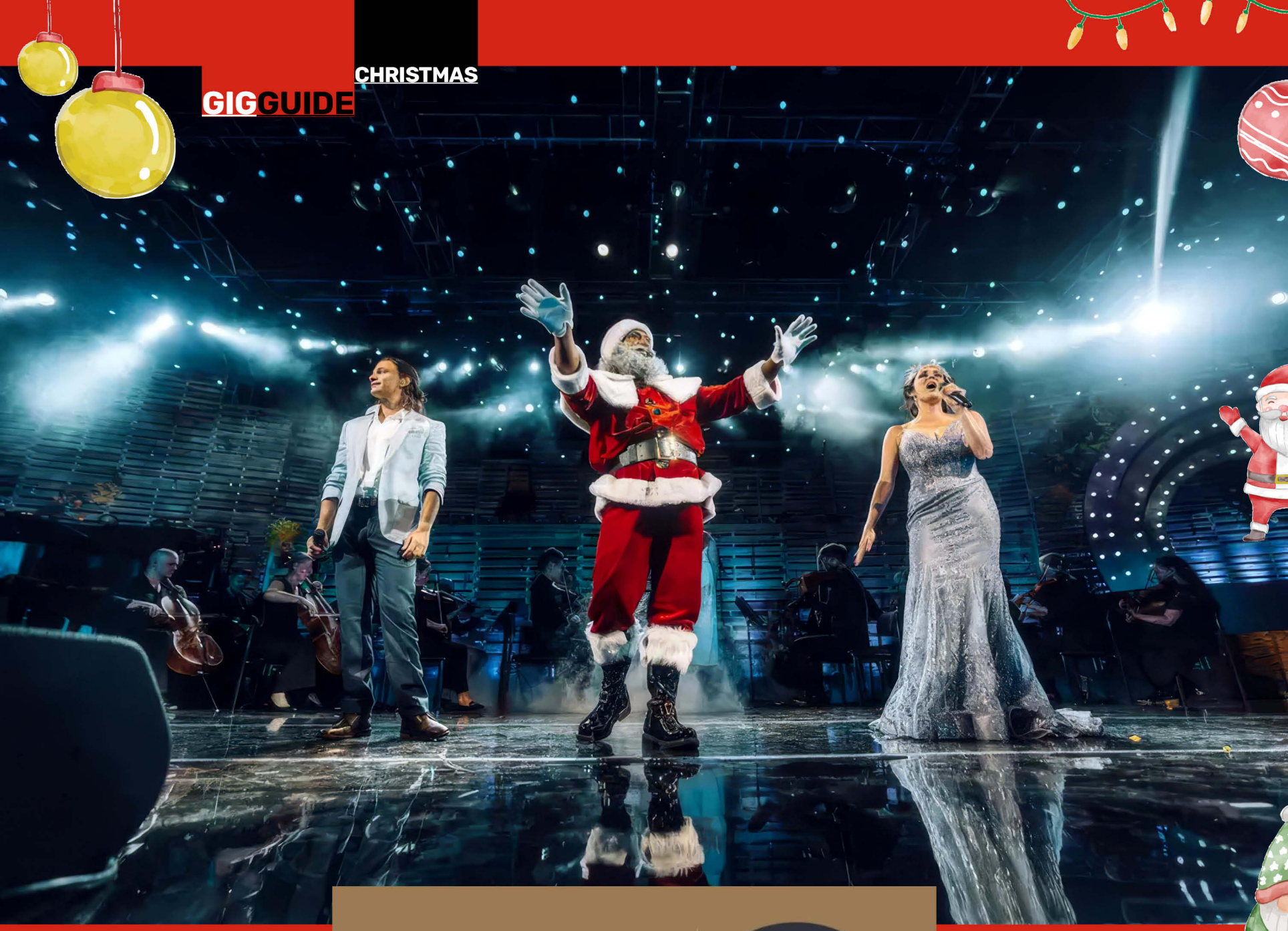
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<CONTINUED FROM #13> the Surfers Paradise Beachfront Markets from 4pm, then settle in with a picnic rug for a movie screening at 7pm, concluding with a spectacular fireworks display at 8:30pm. A magical evening of sand, sea, and Christmas cheer for families and friends alike.

Dates: Friday 12 & Saturday 13 December 2025 | Movie 7pm, Fireworks 8:30pm

Location: Surfers Paradise Beach, Cavill Avenue, Surfers Paradise, QLD

Price: Free

Booking: Not required

14. Lord Mayor's Christmas Carols, Brisbane

Riverstage in Brisbane City will light up on 6 December 2025 from 6pm for the Lord Mayor's Christmas Carols, an annual celebration of festive music under the stars. The evening promises a stellar lineup of Aussie talent performing classic carols alongside big-name acts. Tickets are required to attend, but the magic can still be enjoyed for free via the livestream at Roma Street Parkland. Bring a picnic, grab a bite from the food trucks, and gather friends or family for a night of music, lights and holiday cheer.



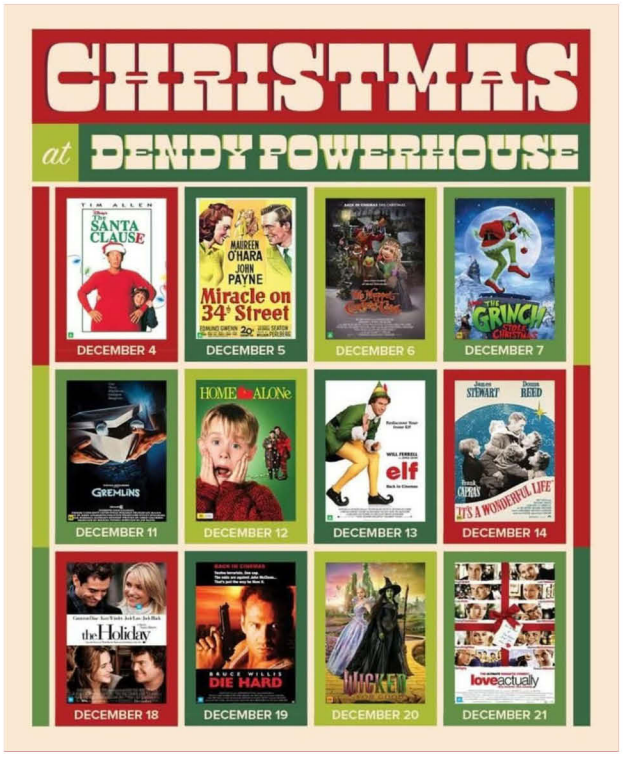
15. Sono Lumo: Festive Nights of Sound and Light, Brisbane

Queen's Wharf Brisbane will come alive from 10 to 21 December 2025 (6pm–11pm, excluding 15–16 December) with Sono Lumo, a free celebration of light, sound and festive fun. Each night features three spectacular shows combining dazzling visuals, immersive audio, pop-up bars, food trucks and roaming entertainment. No ticket is needed—just wander, soak it all in, and enjoy a night out with a few surprises along the way.

16. City Hall Lights, Brisbane

King George Square will dazzle from 6 to 24 December 2025 as City Hall Lights returns, a Brisbane favourite. Every 15 minutes from 7:30pm to midnight, the front of City Hall transforms into a vibrant canvas of projections, **<TURN TO #15>**

CONTINUED FROM #14 bringing a new Christmas story to life each year through visuals and sound. This free, family-friendly event is perfect for kids and adults alike—grab a spot early and enjoy a festive tradition in the heart of the city.



17. Spirit of Christmas at QPAC, Brisbane

QPAC Concert Hall at South Bank will host Spirit of Christmas from 17 to 19 December 2025, a beloved annual celebration of music and festive cheer. The concert features performances from Australia's top musical theatre talent, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and a variety of choirs, blending traditional and modern Christmas classics. With heart, harmony and holiday joy filling the iconic venue, tickets sell quickly—don't miss your chance to be part of this seasonal favourite.

18. Bribie Island Christmas Lights Boat Parade

The Bribie Island Canals will sparkle on 13 December 2025 at 7pm for the annual Christmas Lights Boat Parade. Boats decked out in fairy lights glide along the canals and Pumicestone Passage, accompanied by a laser show, live music and food trucks. The event is free and draws thousands, so grab a spot near Pacific Harbour Marina for the full spectacle, or find a quieter vantage point along the route. Bring your own seating and enjoy a couple of magical hours of festive cheer.

19. Christmas Movie in the Park, Pimpama

Bim'Bimba Park at Gainsborough Greens will transform into a festive wonderland on 14 December 2025 for Christmas Movie in the Park. The day features live music, face painting, pony rides, obstacle courses, markets, nine food trucks and a special visit from Santa. As evening falls, Santa Clause 3 screens under the stars, capped off with fireworks at 8:30pm. This free, family-friendly event is one of the biggest Christmas community celebrations in the area.

20. Pine Rivers Christmas Carols, Strathpine

Pine Rivers Park will come alive on 14 December 2025 for the annual Christmas Carols, a night full of festive fun for all ages. Santa's Village offers craft workshops and face painting for the kids, while the main stage showcases local talent performing beloved carols. A twilight market and food trucks add to the festive atmosphere, and the evening concludes with a fireworks display at 8pm.

21. Dendy Powerhouse Outdoor Cinema Christmas Classics, New Farm

From 4 to 21 December 2025, Dendy Powerhouse Outdoor Cinema at Brisbane Powerhouse in New Farm will screen festive favourites including The Grinch, The Muppets Christmas Carol and Miracle on 34th Street. Enjoy a relaxed summer night under the stars—bring a picnic or grab a bite from on-site options—and soak up the Christmas spirit on the big screen.



REWIND 2025

Pilots, Posters, Pagers

Australia's Quiet New Map

How small acts across a year revealed a bigger national shift



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The front pages this year were held together by something quieter and harder to package: people working out what it means to belong, to care, to age, to raise children, to speak up and to listen. From flight schools in Salisbury training India's next generation of pilots to a Monash researcher asking why South Asian women struggle to access contraception, to a volunteer firefighter swapping his IT desk for the fireground when the pager buzzes, 2025 was filled with ordinary people pushing against big systems. Education, politics, health, faith, art, festivals, family—each story felt local, yet together they sketched a national mood.

A pattern runs through them. The Indian and South Asian diaspora is no longer the quiet supporting cast of Australian life. It is on the flight deck, at the polling booth, in university labs, on protest lines, at the fireground, and in living rooms where mothers and children decide how honest they can be with each other. The questions are blunt. Who gets trained for the future. Who gets the microphone. Who gets safe care. Who gets called Aussie.

Training for a different kind of take off

Our February cover sat on a runway in the City of Salisbury. Flight Training Adelaide has been in Johan Pienaar's hands for 17 years, and in that time the air above Adelaide has filled with accents from India, China, Japan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. Pienaar joked, "Pardon the pun," he laughs, "but Indian students bring a different spice to the student demographic." It was a light line that pointed to a serious export story.

FTA is a specialist outfit, not a sandstone university, yet it trains pilots for some of the world's fastest growing airlines. IndiGo's expansion in India has created ❮TURN TO #18❯





CONTINUED FROM #17 a constant hunger for pilots, and the Adelaide partnership is now part of that machine. "IndiGo came to us with the idea of collaborating with two or three training providers," Johan recalls. After their visit, FTA made the cut and the two sides built a model that looks very different from traditional airline funding. IndiGo does not pay for the course. It offers a letter that says, in plain terms, that if students meet strict standards, "the letter essentially guarantees them a job with the airline, creating a seamless pathway to employment."

For South Australia, this is education as high value export. Mayor Gillian Aldridge put it bluntly: "The City of Salisbury is proud of Flight Training Adelaide's role in training cadets from around the world, equipping them with the skills they need to get their aviation careers off the ground and into the skies." It is a reminder that "international education" is not only lectures and essays. It is instrument ratings, multi-crew training and the quiet pressure of a cockpit where "two people in the cockpit can achieve more than the sum of their individual efforts," as Johan explains.

The Australian Trade Commissioner to India, Vik Singh, joined the dots further. "The Australia-India education partnership is an important pillar of our relationship, bridging our communities, building future-ready workforces, and driving economic growth." In his words, "This partnership between FTA and IndiGo exemplifies the synergies and innovative business models between Australia and India."

By July, our cover had shifted from the cockpit to the classroom and the bedroom desk. A mini survey of young Australians, from Hobart to Darwin, found a generation both excited and uneasy about the future of work. They spoke a different language to airline contracts, but the thread was the same: skills, security and a fear that formal education is lagging.

University student Aatreyee sees herself "writing for a living" in five years, but when asked if her degree is preparing her for that future, her verdict is cautious: "Somewhat." Others repeat that word. They want AI skills, design skills, financial literacy and public speaking, yet these are often picked up on YouTube rather than in lecture theatres. One student, Neha from Hobart, boiled down the mood: "Being able to work with whatever comes next. Maybe that's the only skill we need."

Around them, worry lines multiply. Job security, mental health, the cost of living, AI taking over tasks that used to define a career—many listed all of them in one breath. Still, they remain hungry to learn. Kartik from Sydney explained why traditional teaching alone is not enough: "Learning from someone who's doing the job, not just talking about it, makes all the difference."

Put FTA and this youth snapshot side by side and a single question appears: how quickly can Australian education, at every level, move from describing the future to actually training people for it.

Whose voice counts when we talk about equality

If February and July asked who gets trained, March and April asked who gets heard. The More Voices, More Representation survey, our March cover, made for uneasy reading ahead of International Women's Day. Across 1,017 respondents, the picture was jagged. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQIA+ women reported more visibility at events. Culturally and linguistically diverse women, including many with migrant histories, reported seeing less of themselves on stage.

The raw numbers stuck: 67 per cent of women from marginalised groups, and 85 per cent of straight, white, able-bodied women, said they had never been invited to speak at an IWD event. Representation was felt most when "women's achievements were highlighted", when "initiatives focusing on empowerment were showcased", and when people saw "speakers who looked or sounded like them". Exclusion was recognised in panels that felt disconnected from daily life and the "absence of speakers who reflected their backgrounds".

Advocates did not mince their words. Tiff Ng argued, "Many organisations focus too heavily on diversity without prioritising inclusion. This report makes clear that CALD women in positions of power remain rare, and the consequences of their exclusion ripple through communities."

On the political side, 80 per cent of women said that leaders should reflect the country's diversity, and 52 per cent said diversity influenced their vote. Rachel Yang, partner at Giant Leap, put the onus squarely on leadership: "Representation in 2025 requires leaders—both corporate and political—who refuse to cave under pressure. With 80% of women saying diversity in politics matters, the message is clear: inclusivity isn't an add-on, it's a necessity."

The April cover moved that conversation into the hard maths of an election. With an Australian federal poll called, Indian-origin voters and candidates suddenly found themselves the subject of a scramble. There were festivals, greetings, school funding announcements and photo opportunities. Behind the colour, our interviews asked TURN TO #19

CONTINUED FROM #18 whether any of this would translate into long term trust.

Academic and community volunteer Harpreet Kandra pushed back against the idea that cost of living could be fixed at the ballot box. “Even though the cost of living is a major topic in political discussions across the globe, it is important to recognise that rising living costs are not unique to Australia—they are increasing worldwide,” he said. “Regardless of which government comes into power next, the cost of living is unlikely to see any major reductions.”

Entrepreneur Param Singh felt the pinch most in “utilities and insurance”, and did not shy away from naming a gap. “We are among the highest taxpayers in this country, but political parties do not actively engage with us,” he argued. His point was not abstract. It was geographic. “If political parties genuinely want to engage with us, they should be holding town halls” in suburbs where Indian-origin populations have crossed double digits. He sees demography without matching attention.

Sociologist Supriya Singh offered a more layered response. “I don’t think anyone can take my vote for granted,” she said. Diwali greetings and messages for Gurpurab told her that parties see migrant communities. Yet she is blunt about trust. “I don’t really trust politicians anymore. Time and again, what they say and what they do have been completely different.” She still believes in the power of the vote, but her memories stretch back to Whitlam and a time when governments made university education free.

Into this field of electoral promises and representation gaps, our November cover added a very specific silence. Monash PhD candidate Sethini Wickramasinghe’s research on South Asian women’s access to contraception shows how easily a large migrant group can be invisible in health data. “Women who have migrated to Australia from South Asia are one of the largest migrant groups in the country, with many women migrating during their reproductive age,” she said, yet “migrant and refugee women have lower uptake of contraception and experience more barriers when accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare compared to women born in Australia.”

The barriers she TURN TO #20



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CONTINUED FROM #19 documents are both cultural and structural: "a lack of information or education about contraception, pressure from family members to have children, English-language barriers and concerns of maintaining one's confidentiality during consultations." Feedback from the community shows that even raising the topic for unmarried women can be controversial, yet unmarried women are precisely those who face the sharpest stigma.

Across these three covers, the focus shifts from a conference stage to a polling booth to a GP clinic, but the core question is the same. When Australian institutions talk about equality, whose realities shape the agenda. Whose discomfort is treated as a priority, and whose is left in the background.

Mothers, children and the courage to affirm identity

If March, April and November dealt with systems, our May cover sat in the most intimate system there is, the parent child relationship. For Mother's Day, we told the story of Fida and his mother, doctor and educator Bari, whose response to her child's transition cut through many of the clichés that dominate debate.

Fida came to Australia as an 18 year old media student. On the day his parents were due to fly back to India, he told them he no longer identified as female. It was a moment delayed by years of quiet discomfort. Bari remembers the early signs: "Somehow, we always knew Fida was different," she said. "Even as a kid, he avoided dolls and dresses. We wondered if it was a phase." When the truth finally arrived, she says, "It wasn't shock—it was relief. We were just happy he could finally tell us."

The sentence that changed everything came from Fida's father: "We would've started hormone therapy sooner if we'd known." That set in motion a series of medical and legal steps, guided by a mother who refused to let bureaucracy dictate her child's future. Fida recalls watching her in government offices, "She mastered the entire legal process (having read all the rulebooks) just for me. That, to me, is a huge thing. It's these little moments, really, that add up and mean everything."

Bari is frank about the limits of her own training. "We were never really oriented to understand much about being transgender or gender incongruence," she admitted. "In fact, it was often viewed as a disorder—something that needed to be 'corrected'." Years of medical practice did not shield her from old ideas, but the day her child came out, she chose to listen rather than cling to them. Her line to Fida is disarmingly simple: "It's no big deal," she says. "This is how he was born—completely natural. We're just proud he's living his truth."

That clarity did not erase difficulty. Changing documents across institutions required persistence. "Every office, every government department—it was the same confusion," Bari said. Yet through that work, Fida gained something even more valuable than a corrected passport: the ability to speak freely with his mother. "I've become more open and comfortable with her," he said. "I find myself sharing more with her. That's honestly the best part—just being able to talk to her more freely."

His therapist once asked him to keep close something that reminded him why he wanted to stay alive. Fida chose a photo of his mum and their dog, Bella, as his phone wallpaper. Bari, in turn, sees continuity rather than rupture. "She made me proud in her first phase of life as a daughter," she said. "And now, in his second phase as a son, I'm just as proud—maybe even more. I'm confident he'll keep thriving, and it really doesn't make a difference. To me, Fida is the same person then and now."

Her advice to other parents is as blunt as it is tender. "These children may be different from others, but they are ours. If we don't stand by them, then who will?"

There is an echo here with Sethini's research, where unmarried women's sexual health is treated as too delicate to ask about. In both cases, silence is often presented as protection. Our May and November covers argue the opposite. Protection comes from naming realities clearly, whether that is a trans son's needs or a South Asian woman's right to plan her family. The work begins at home, but it does not end there.

Second innings and the long game of contribution

By June, our front page turned to a man in his late sixties who treats life like a series of innings rather than a straight career ladder. Former banker, badminton champion, volunteer, actor and producer Satinder Chawla has lived enough lives to fill a novel, yet he tells them with the ease of someone who still feels like he is just getting started.

He remembers the letter that pulled him into Punjab TURN TO #21

CONTINUED FROM #20 & Sind Bank as a teenager, telling him to join "once he attained 'maturity'". "When I turned 18, after the first year of my Bachelor of Commerce degree, I joined the bank in 1976," he recalls with a laugh. Banking became his main track, but badminton and athletics ran alongside, then community work, then volunteering, then film.

After decades of steady work, a Voluntary Retirement Scheme opened the door to Australia, where his sons had settled. His bosses were disappointed. He and his wife, Jaswinder, decided to reset anyway. In Melbourne he took a role at the airport, guiding passengers and staff, mixing languages with customers and greetings with directions. "The airport was like a swimming pool of languages," he said. "I used to greet people in multiple languages."

He remembers one traveller in tears over a lost bag that held her "documents and valuables". He found it and handed it back. "I got a lot of blessings," he says. It is a small story of attention, yet it says more about ageing and dignity than many policy papers.

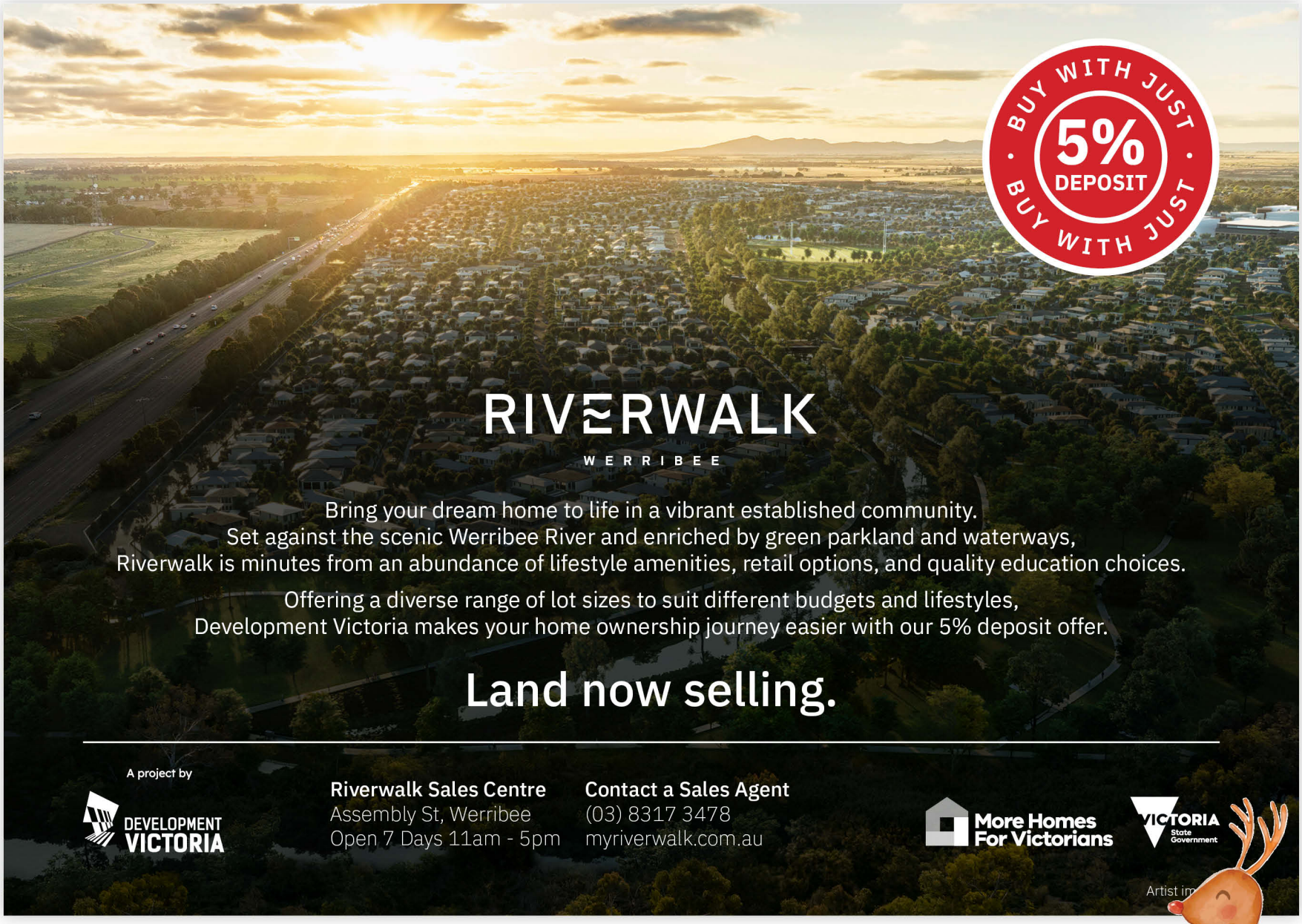
Sport, of course, followed him. He built a community sports club in Craigieburn, turned casual table tennis into badminton and cricket meets, and competed in the Sudirman Cup and Sikh Games. In parallel he acted in Strings, The Hidden Truth, Haloona and more, slowly moving from short films to features. Ek Lamba Jeha Houka is just the latest in a list that includes Big Daddy and Maa Sadke. His production company shows that migration can be a springboard for creative risk rather than a cap on ambition.

Through it all he keeps circling back to values taught by his parents. "I haven't seen God, but I believe my parents were God," he says. "They taught me the true values of life—helping others, sharing what you have, and living with compassion."

Read Satinder alongside our July youth survey and the gulf between generations looks smaller than it appears. The students we spoke to want flexibility, purpose and the chance to do work that matters. They worry that institutions are slow and the world is fast. Satinder's life shows a different route: change organisations when you must, build your own when you can, and keep leaning towards contribution. Careers may twist, but the axis of service can stay steady.

TURN TO #22







Sirens, service and everyday leadership

If Satinder shows what contribution looks like over decades, our August cover showed what it looks like when a pager cuts through dinner. When the call comes, volunteer firefighter and Justice of the Peace Karthick Thanigaimani might be "at dinner with his family or winding down after a day in IT." The sound pulls him from private life into high risk public work.

He joined the Country Fire Authority nearly ten years ago and has seen "everything from local grassfires to the brutal 2019 to 2020 bushfire season." Each event, he says, "tested my limits, taught me something new, and deepened my commitment." He describes firefighting as a "calling", "a quiet but persistent urge to contribute in a meaningful way." That word, quiet, is important. He has medals and titles, but he keeps returning to the feeling of purpose: "What keeps me going isn't recognition or reward, it's the indescribable feeling of purpose that comes from helping others when they need it most."

During COVID, when fires and storms mixed with a mental health crisis, he took on extra duties with the State Emergency Services and mental health organisations. "Being a first responder is not only physically demanding but sometimes it takes a real mental toll," he says. The response, for him, is not to harden up but to build support. "It's perfectly okay to not be okay," he tells men in migrant communities. "Seeking support is a sign of strength."

His Justice of the Peace work looks quieter from the outside. Yet certifying a document for a stranger, listening carefully, being a stable presence in ordinary legal moments—all of that draws on the same steadiness required on a fireground. "Every incident is different," he says. "Often we don't have the full picture until we're on scene. That uncertainty becomes part of the training, we learn to adapt, to think quickly, to support one another no matter what lies ahead."

His family is central to that resilience. "My wife, Ranjani, and our children, Adarsh and Trinay, have been my constant support, they understand the calling, even when it pulls me away at the most unexpected times." He remembers them telling him, as sirens echoed, "Dad, you have to go, it's an emergency." The worry is real, particularly during bushfire campaigns and pandemics, but "that worry is always wrapped in love and understanding."

Karthick is wary of burning out. "I'm mindful of not overcommitting," he says. "I make sure to set clear boundaries. I plan and prioritise based on what's most important at the time, and I ensure work as well as family comes first." That may be the most quietly radical part of his story: a volunteer who treats sustainability as seriously as selflessness.

By putting Karthick on the cover, we tried to make visible the work of thousands of volunteers across Australia whose names rarely make it into print. It ties back to the March survey's focus on who gets a platform. Some forms of service are celebrated with awards and press conferences. Others happen at two in the morning on the side of a highway, or at a community food drive, or in the corner of a GP clinic where a Justice of the Peace listens carefully before stamping a form.

Posters, diyas and who we call Aussie

Our September and October covers pulled the year's themes into public space. On 31 August, at an anti immigration protest in Adelaide's Rundle Park, artist Peter Drew walked into a tense crowd carrying a poster of Monga Khan, an Indian hawker who lived here more than a century ago. Beneath Khan's portrait, one word: "AUSSIE."

"I knew it would only take one or two angry people to tear it down," he said later. Yet the conversations he had that day did not fit the social media caricatures. "All the people I spoke to weren't angry in that way. I came away feeling that the differences between 'us and them' are actually very small."

For nearly ten years, Drew has been pasting Monga Khan's face across Australian cities. He chose the word "Aussie" deliberately, to connect a visibly South Asian face to a label that many still imagine as white by default. "The street is a public forum. Who feels they belong there is crucial for democracy," he says. Online arguments can be bitter and shallow. Posters on a wall force people to share space, to ask why an old Indian face is claiming the word that once excluded people like him.

In 2025 he is preparing three new designs—"an Indian man, one of a Chinese woman, and one of a Syrian woman," all drawn from Victorian archives. His hope is simple: that by confronting people with forgotten histories, "you can see people... change their attitude and the story they have in their mind about what Australia is."

Our October ‹TURN TO #23›

❮CONTINUED FROM #22❯ Diwali cover came at the same question from the inside of homes. For Pallavi and Pritom in Melbourne, and for Saleha and her extended family, Diwali is neither a tourist event nor a branding exercise. It is a set of rituals that keep memory alive.

Pallavi remembers learning rangoli in Ahmedabad, turning floors into patterns "using coloured rice flour, sand, and flower petals", welcoming Lakshmi. In Melbourne she says, "I make different rangolis. My favourite activity is decorating the house, putting up the lights." Pritom is colour blind, "so he cannot help with the rangoli, but he fixes the lights and takes photos of my work, it's a shared responsibility." Their daughter calls their gatherings "Namo Namo parties", tying social warmth to the sound of prayer.

For Pritom, memories of Kolkata are full of Kali Puja, "a different vibe" on the day before Diwali, of goat meat cooked without onion or garlic as an offering. There is a vivid story of firecrackers laid in the sun, only to fail because a cautious grandfather "had secretly poured water on them as our punishment."

Saleha's Melbourne Diwali is framed by food and continuity. She remembers her father in law asking her elder daughter to light the first diya. "That moment has stayed with me." Her dinners reached 60 or 70 guests at one point. Now she keeps it closer to 30, because "clean-up after 70 people is no joke." Still, the core remains: "I love having our home filled with friends and family—the glow of diyas, the sound of laughter, music in the background, the aroma of food, and everyone just enjoying themselves. I know our friends look forward to it each year, and that makes me happy. The night always ends with full hearts, full stomachs, and beautiful memories to carry forward."



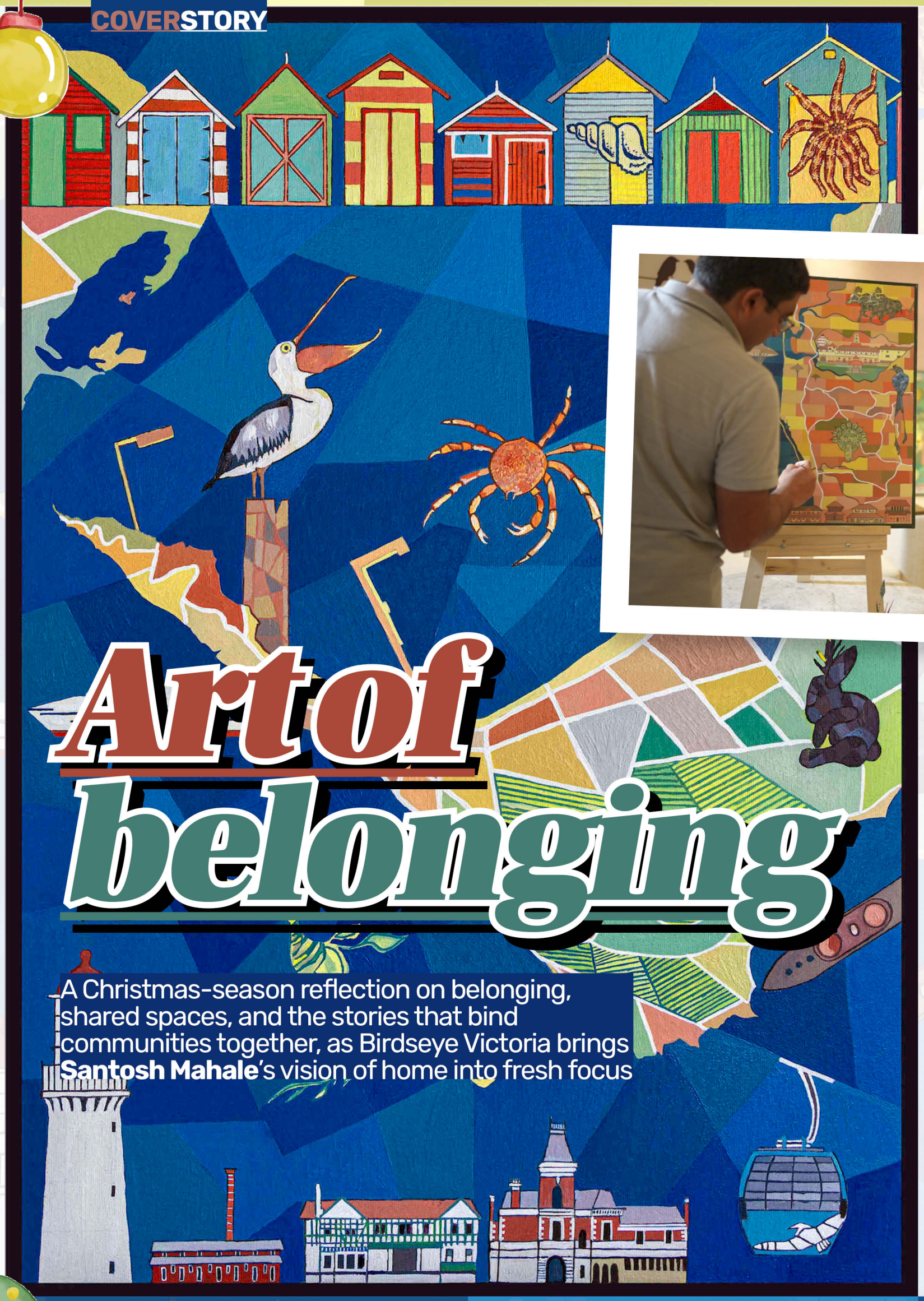
Place Drew's posters next to these living rooms and a fuller picture of Australian belonging appears. One is an artist insisting that an Indian hawker from the early twentieth century belongs in the national story. The other is a set of families whose Diwali dinners, rangoli and kebabs have quietly reshaped suburbs in Melbourne over two decades.

Add in FTA's Indian cadets, young Australians gaming out their futures, women fighting for a seat at the microphone, migrant communities weighing their vote, South Asian women explaining what contraception access really looks like, elders like Satinder treating their seventies as another creative chapter, and volunteers like Karthick pulling on boots at midnight, and 2025 looks less like a year of isolated stories and more like a map.

A map of how one community, across cities and generations, is building a life here—on the flight deck, in the polling booth, at the puja room, in the waiting room, on the fireground, at the poster wall.

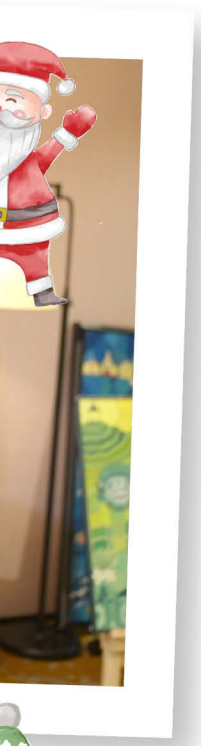
The headlines of 2026 will be different. The questions underneath are likely to be the same. Who gets trained. Who gets heard. Who gets safe care. Who feels safe to celebrate. Who is ready when the pager sounds. And, on walls and in living rooms, who we are willing to look at and simply call "Aussie".





Art of belonging

A Christmas-season reflection on belonging, shared spaces, and the stories that bind communities together, as Birdseye Victoria brings **Santosh Mahale**'s vision of home into fresh focus



SIDDHARTH SURESH
@the_indian_sun

There is a quiet sense of purpose in the way **Santosh Mahale** speaks about art. He arrived in Melbourne as an engineer who had already lived across continents, worked in boardrooms, and built a career in management consulting. Yet the stories he tells today come from a very different place. They rise from birds, old streets, worship spaces, memories of India, the rhythms of Melbourne, and a lifelong habit of seeing cities from above. His latest exhibition, Birdseye Victoria, has now opened at Montsalvat's Barn Gallery, running from 26 November through the summer period and into early February. For visitors looking for inspiration during the Christmas break, it offers a thoughtful journey through the state he calls home, shaped by two countries, two cultures, and two creative worlds that continue to guide his practice. It is a story that begins with movement across borders and finds its voice in the places he has carried with him.

When Mahale talks about identity, he starts with migration. "Two Worlds is really the foundation of my story. India and Australia, engineering and art, migration and belonging. Though I've lived and travelled across many countries, it is India's cities and my current home of Melbourne that have shaped me the most." There is calm clarity in his acceptance of this duality. He describes these worlds as distinct yet connected, held together through colour, memory and birdsong. "Migration taught me that identity isn't about choosing one place over another. It's about weaving them together. My map-inspired oil paintings are simply a reflection of that. A celebration of belonging to more than one place, and of finding connection across continents, careers, and cultures."

That link between places defines his journey as an artist. When he moved into Melbourne's creative landscape, there was no existing network to rely on. "I'm a self-taught artist who came into the art world after two decades in management consulting, built on an engineering background. So there was virtually no overlap. No network, no roadmap, no exposure to how galleries or art ecosystems work." What could have been a setback became a structure. "The challenge was starting from scratch and building an entire world from the ground up. But I soon realised that the analytical, problem-solving and project-planning skills from my first career became incredibly useful. They allowed me to approach art-making methodically and think like an artrepreneur from day one."

That mix of artistic instinct and structured thinking is visible in his paintings, especially the churches that have become a recurring motif. He has painted more than thirty, spread across Melbourne, Goa, Mumbai and beyond. "I'm drawn to heritage architecture in all forms. Churches, temples, old government buildings from the gold-rush era, anything with historical craftsmanship. Architecture is art expressed through materials, design, and the cultural context of its time." Churches, in particular, have become visual anchors. "Churches in particular often represent the dominant artistic influences of their era, and they sit at the heart of communities, whether in Melbourne, Goa, or regional India."

For Mahale, the attachment is primarily architectural, though he acknowledges the deeper presence such structures hold within a place. "Mostly architectural, but when I'm trying to capture the essence of an entire place on a single canvas, these structures become visual anchors. Just as Notre Dame is to Paris, St Patrick's or St Mark's is to Melbourne, or Mount Mary is to Bandra. They help root the viewer in the identity of that place." His interest is less about devotion and more about what these sites reveal. "It's less about personal faith and more about capturing the confluence of spiritual beliefs that shape a place. My work is grounded in exploration, blending cartography, heritage architecture, and nature, especially birds."

The Birdseye series grew from this instinct to express place through pattern, perspective and memory. "My subject is always the essence of a place on a single canvas. Not two, three, or twenty. That constraint forces strong choices." His compositions weave maps, landscape elements, built forms and birds. "Choosing what to include is as much problem-solving as it is painting, and that challenge makes the process deeply exciting for me." The idea, he says, has been with him for more than twenty years. "I've been painting the same subject in the same way for over two decades. It began in San Francisco, where I would paint places I travelled as souvenirs for myself. Over time the technique evolved, more detail, more depth, but the subject remained consistent." He smiles at the simplicity of the thread that runs through it all. "Now, as a professional artist, I'm stretching the breadth and depth of what I can cover, but always through that Birdseye lens. And a big part of it is my love for birds. Every Birdseye painting has a local bird species acting **<TURN TO #27>**

> "I'm drawn to heritage architecture in all forms. Churches, temples, old government buildings from the gold-rush era, anything with historical craftsmanship
>
> **SANTOSH MAHALE**


FLINDERS ST
300



CONTINUED FROM #25 as an ambassador for that place."

Birdseye Victoria is the newest expansion of this idea. Instead of a single city, the exhibition travels across the entire state, gathering forests, coastlines, deserts, towns and skylines into one continuous story. "For the first time, I'm painting an entire state instead of a single city. Victoria is my home, and I've spent years travelling through its regions, absorbing the contrasts, forests, coastlines, deserts, gold-rush towns, and modern cities." The result, he says, is a state-sized canvas of histories and habitats. "These varied landscapes and histories make Victoria a fascinating subject. Birdseye Victoria brings all of that together in one cohesive narrative."

The exhibition introduces another creative voice, that of local artist and fellow bird enthusiast Mia Emily. Mahale calls the collaboration seamless. "Birdseye Victoria is the next chapter in my Birdseye series, and I'm very glad to collaborate with local Melbourne artist and fellow bird enthusiast Mia Emily. My works offer sweeping aerial perspectives, blending maps, topography, and birds as place ambassadors. Mia brings a grounded, intimate lens, capturing the delicate beauty and character of Victorian birds." Together, they create a layered experience. "The show invites viewers to see Victoria as a living ecosystem where every place, and every bird, tells a story."

Precision and freedom coexist within these compositions, though he admits that harmony is never easy. "That balance is the art. It's the core problem I'm solving, how to bring a place to life with enough structure to ground it and enough freedom to let it breathe. The balance becomes the subject itself."

Exhibiting at Montsalvat is a milestone he speaks of with genuine warmth. "It's an honour, and I'm hoping to shift my studio there for the two months of the exhibition. Montsalvat embodies the artistic spirit of Victoria, a sanctuary for makers, thinkers, and dreamers for nearly a century. The idea of painting in that historic, creative environment while preparing for my 2026 shows is incredibly energising."

When asked about the art scenes he has moved through, he is careful and honest. "I can't truly compare because I didn't grow up in the formal Indian art world. But what I've seen in my last few years as a professional artist is that every market has its own strengths and challenges. Australia offers clarity, structure, and strong support through public galleries and councils." He has seen a shift in the way multicultural artists are welcomed. "Absolutely. From local councils to national platforms, there is strong support for diverse artists. I'm grateful for the opportunities I've received so far and excited to take my work to major cities and regional centres across Australia."

His studio routine reveals a person who works with discipline as much as imagination. "Nothing is typical in the art world. Luckily, my consulting background prepared me for uncertainty, tight timelines, and intense workloads. The common thread is the enormous amount of work required, and the joy I get from pouring myself into it. In terms of routine I am generally a very early riser and try to finish most of my creative activities in the first half of the day." The energy he brings comes from curiosity. "There's always a story waiting to be uncovered, and my subject, landscapes, heritage, maps, birds, naturally invites exploration. That keeps me moving forward."

Music and sound become tools in his process. "A mix. I listen to podcasts during long hours alone. And music, often of the place I'm painting, helps me immerse myself. When I painted Kolkata, for example, Rabindra Sangeet was playing on loop."

He resists naming influences, choosing respect over lists. "People expect a list, but my honest answer is that I draw inspiration from every artist who has managed to build a sustainable practice. It's a very hard profession. Anyone who has cracked it becomes an inspiration and influence." Travel has shaped him just as deeply. "Too many. I've travelled to over fifty countries and lived in more than six. I see myself as a global citizen now, shaped by cultures, landscapes, and experiences across continents. Each place adds a new layer."

The future is already mapped out, and he speaks of it with quiet excitement. "Next is Birdseye San Francisco, coming in March 2026, returning to the city where my artistic journey began, even when art was just a side hobby. The inspiration has remained the same; the scale and ambition have evolved."

His final reflection brings together the path he has taken and the places that have shaped him. "Every place has a story waiting to be told. All it requires is curiosity to ask, humbleness to learn, and generosity to share that knowledge for the collective good. If my paintings spark that sense of connection and discovery, then they've done their job."

For those visiting Montsalvat between now and February, Birdseye Victoria is a chance to slow down, explore the state through an artist's eye, and enjoy a moment of quiet discovery during the holiday season. It is an exhibition rooted in belonging, carried by birds and places, and shared with the generosity of someone who has lived across worlds yet remains firmly grounded in both..





Healing Through Henna brings colour and calm to Casey

OUR REPORTER *CASEY*
@the_indian_sun

On 15 November, the Multicultural Women's Alliance Against Family Violence brought the community together in Casey for its **Healing Through Henna** event, filling the room with colour, conversation and a relaxed atmosphere. The gathering was supported by the Victorian Government through the Multicultural Festivals and Events Program and drew a strong turnout from local residents who arrived for henna art, music and a space to unwind.

Belinda Wilson MP joined Mayor Stefan Coomen, Cr Michelle Crowther, Cr Scott Dowling, Cr Carolyn Eaves and Cr Kim Ross for the occasion, adding to the sense of shared community effort. The hall stayed lively throughout the day as families sat together over henna designs, chatted across tables and joined in the dancing that carried the mood forward.

Henna carries different meanings across cultures, **❮TURN TO #29❯**











<CONTINUED FROM #28> from wishes of good fortune to a symbol of affection or protection. It has also become a simple creative outlet for many, which helped the event strike a warm, familiar tone. The organisers wanted an atmosphere where families could relax, meet new people and feel supported.

Dr Veena Barsiwal, Co-Chair of MWAAFV, said she was "heartened by the turnout. The ambience was just right, with parents and children enjoying a fun day out. The success of this event reflects the hard work behind it, and seeing more smiles in the room made it worthwhile. The music, dance and food added so much to the day."

Her fellow Co-Chair, Nisha Gull-e-Nishat, said the afternoon showed what community connection can do. "Healing Through Henna brought culture, calm and connection into one room, an uplifting way to reduce isolation and remind everyone that wellbeing starts in community."

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NSW community language teachers celebrated

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Hundreds of teachers who keep community languages alive in New South Wales gathered in Sydney for the annual dinner of the **NSW Federation of Community Language Schools**, drawing warm praise from both sides of politics.

The Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Jihad Dib, spoke with the ease of someone who has lived the work. "As an educator prior to becoming an MP I know the contribution these teachers make and I have long been a supporter of the work they do to celebrate our diverse community."

He joined teachers, students, families and Federation leaders, calling the event "an incredible night of celebration, recognition and joy." He said he has "always believed that learning a language is not just about the words, but the culture, spirit and identity, we all have within us."

It was also the first major outing for the newly elected NSW Opposition Leader, Kellie Sloane, who began her tenure by acknowledging the communities that shape the state. "I couldn't think of a better way to spend my first day as NSW Liberal Leader than celebrating the multicultural communities that make our state great."

> "I've always believed that learning a language is not just about the words, but the culture, spirit and identity, we all have within us
>
> **JIHAB DIB, MINISTER OF CUSTOMER SERVICE & DIGITAL GOVERNMENT**

She described the teachers and volunteers she met as "hardworking, aspirational and inspiring" and said her party had supported the sector in government ❮TURN TO #31❯









CONTINUED FROM #30 because "we recognised the vital role they play in keeping children connected to their family, culture and heritage." She added that she was "truly touched by the warm welcome" and hoped to return annually.

One of the evening's most moving moments was the honouring of Mrs Soula Tsilimos, a Modern Greek educator whose service spans 47 years. She received the Medal of Service from both the Minister and the Opposition Leader.

Mrs Tsilimos reflected with modesty and warmth. "I am humbled and deeply honoured to receive this award. I wish my late husband, Michael Tsilimos, could be here to celebrate this achievement with me. I know he would be so proud."

Federation CEO Michael Christodoulou paid tribute to her lifelong contribution. "Soula's dedication, passion and warmth have shaped the lives of countless students. Her influence reaches far beyond the classroom, she has built bridges between language, culture and our diverse community in NSW." He also noted the scale of the annual gathering, describing it as the largest event of its kind in the sector.

The Federation represents more than 220 after-hours community language schools, teaching 72 languages across 460 locations with the help of 2,700 teachers and volunteers. More than 29,000 students attend these classes each week, forming one of the country's most diverse education networks. The dinner served as a reminder of how strongly this work is supported across the political spectrum, and how central these schools have become to the cultural life of NSW.





Hello Zindagi marks first anniversary with a message of community spirit

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The **Hello Zindagi** team marked its first anniversary at Knox Library on 18 October with warmth, colour and reflection, celebrating a year of storytelling, connection and cultural exchange.

The event brought together a cross-section of Melbourne's community, including Consul General Dr Sushil Kumar, MP for South East Metropolitan Region Lee Tarlamis, and Maribyrnong Mayor Cr Pradeep Tiwari, along with sponsors, past guests, and listeners of the show.

> This celebration marks a year of building community and creating spaces for people to share stories, find support and celebrate cultural identity in a welcoming environment
>
> **LEE TARLAMIS, OAM MP**

Founder Ruchi Sharma opened the evening with a heartfelt address, saying, "This celebration belongs to everyone who believed, contributed, and connected through this platform." She described Hello Zindagi as more than a greeting, but "a philosophy of mindfulness and acceptance—living every moment consciously, rather than resisting or escaping from it."

The celebration began with a mindfulness session led by life coach Christy Roberts, followed by a vibrant dance performance by Abhivyakti Fine Arts Academy and three lively Bollywood numbers that drew the audience to their feet.

Guests took part in a Diwali Kris Kringle, placing gifts beneath a floral display and selecting one on their way out—a simple act that reflected the show's spirit ❮TURN TO #33❯

<CONTINUED FROM #32> of sharing and community. The evening concluded with food, conversation and curated return gifts for attendees.

Many described the experience as uplifting and grounding. "The event made them pause and appreciate life," one attendee said. Another shared, "It's no longer just a radio program, it's a feeling of connection."

Lee Tarlamis OAM MP later reflected on the occasion, calling it "a wonderful Diwali and multicultural celebration at Knox Library." He said, "This celebration marks a year of building community and creating spaces for people to share stories, find support and celebrate cultural identity in a welcoming environment."

He congratulated Ruchi Sharma and her team for "spreading light, joy and happiness" and said he was confident "the future will be even brighter."

The evening captured the essence of Hello Zindagi's message—to embrace life with gratitude, awareness and joy. ~

> "Thank you Ruchi Sharma, for spreading light, joy and happiness. The future will be even brighter
>
> **LEE TARLAMIS, OAM MP**





Melbourne lights up with Rajasthani Deep Utsav

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun









The colours, sounds, and flavours of Rajasthan came alive in Melbourne as the Association of Australian Rajasthanis Inc. hosted the Rajasthani Deep Utsav Celebration at 46 Vista Court, Fraser Rise. The event, held on 2 November 2025 from 11 am onward, drew families from across Victoria for a day filled with music, dance, and tradition.

The celebration brought the community together to mark the festival of lights with authentic cultural flair. Guests enjoyed mesmerising Kalbelia and Ghoomar performances, admired the skill and rhythm of the dancers, and sampled traditional Rajasthani cuisine through the Rajasthani Jeeman experience, which offered a taste of the royal flavours of the desert state.

Among the guests were Melton City Council Mayor Steve Abboushi, Maribyrnong City Mayor Pradeep Tiwari, and Tej Krishan, Head of Chancery from the Indian Consulate in Melbourne, each praising the vibrant cultural spirit that Rajasthanis have brought to Australia.

Community members also joined in the lively Rajasthani Safa Tying Competition, adding splashes of bright colour and friendly rivalry to the day. The event included cultural activities, a grand website launch, and an atmosphere of warmth and unity that reflected the festival's true meaning.

President Virendra Khatana, Vice President Arix Bhishnoi, Secretary Sanjay Purohit, Treasurer Devendra Singh Khangarot, and PRO Shanik Jain led the organising team, whose efforts ensured a seamless and joyous celebration. The Deep Utsav stood as a symbol of how tradition continues to thrive in new homes, lighting hearts far from Rajasthan's

Queensland MP highlights Nick Attam's Movember drive

OUR REPORTER *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun



With November coming to a close, Movember supporters across Australia are making their final push, and Nick Attam's efforts have again drawn recognition, this time from Queensland's State Member for Jordan, Charis Mullen. During a visit to Townsville, the Shadow Minister for Public Works and Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs shared her reaction after meeting him, writing, "Really great to catch up with the terrific Nick Attam from The Indian Sun whilst in Townsville. But I almost didn't recognise him with that moustache! Nick has been a longtime supporter of Movember having raised over $25,000 for men's mental health."

Her acknowledgement arrives at a moment when the campaign's message is most active. With only a few days left in the month, Movember's call for open conversations, early checks and practical support has taken on a renewed urgency. Nick's advocacy has been shaped by personal stories, including friends who faced illness or mental health struggles in silence. His Movember updates over the years have encouraged men to talk early, seek help when pressure builds, and look out for those who might not voice what they are carrying.

Movember continues to highlight the rising pressures on men in Australia, from mental health concerns to prostate and testicular cancer

Movember continues to highlight the rising pressures on men in Australia, from mental health concerns to prostate and testicular cancer. Its resources, including Movember Conversations, help people approach difficult moments with friends and family. Local support services provide confidential guidance for those dealing with stress or health concerns that may have gone unspoken.

Nick's moustache has become part of the campaign's familiarity, giving people an easy way to begin the conversations that Movember seeks to spark. Charis Mullen's message adds weight to his longstanding role, particularly among multicultural communities where silence around health concerns can be more pronounced.

With November almost at its end, supporters are encouraged to make their final donations or reach out to someone who might need a quiet check-in. Nick's Movember page remains open for contributions, reminding people that small actions still matter as the campaign draws to a close.



WOMADelaide adds 20 more global acts to its 2026 lineup

OUR REPORTER *ADELAIDE*
@the_indian_sun

WOMADelaide's 2026 program has widened again, with another 20 artists confirmed for the four-day festival in Botanic Park/Tainmuntilla next March. The latest announcement draws together artists from across the world, including an exclusive Australian performance by Arrested Development, the first hip-hop act to win Best New Artist at the Grammy Awards. Malian vocalist and activist Oumou Sangaré joins the list, along with Italian pop favourite Jovanotti, who will open the festival.

The additions include a mix of established names and fresh discoveries. BADBADNOTGOOD, the Canadian jazz-fusion group with a reputation for genre-bending collaborations, will perform alongside blues-funk trio MY BABY from the Netherlands and New Zealand. Annie & The Caldwells, the American gospel family band whose recent album found a fan in Sir Elton John, are also on the bill, as is Nusantara Beat, a six-piece Amsterdam group whose sound draws on their Indonesian heritage. They sit alongside Fantastic Negrito from the USA, KAIIT, Mama Kin Spender and Brazilian Australian artist Alcides Neto.

They join the already announced Yothu Yindi, Obongjayar, First Nations gospel singer Kankawa Nagarra, Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker's Rosas danst Rosas, Baker Boy, Troy Cassar-Daley with a string quartet, DJ Jyoty, and the all-female Moroccan ensemble Asmâa Hamzaoui & Bnat Timbouktou.

Among the international performers are Thiruvannamalai Nadaswaram Balaganesan and Thiruvannamalai Nadaswaram P. Bageswari Balaganesan from India. The husband-and-wife duo are dedicated nadaswaram players, having trained from childhood under respected teachers in Madurai and Chennai. They serve as Asthana Vidwans at Sri Ramanasramam ashram and will be accompanied in Adelaide by Thavil Vidwan Purushothaman on the Tamil Nadu thavil.

Altogether, WOMADelaide 2026 will bring more than 600 artists in 69 groups from 38 countries. It continues one of South Australia's strongest cultural partnerships, with government support for the festival extended through to 2029.

Tourism Minister Zoe Bettison said: "There are now another 20 reasons to lock in your March long weekend plans and discover the magic of WOMADelaide. With more than 600 artists coming from 38 countries, there will be something for everyone to enjoy as this impressive lineup transforms our glorious Botanic Park into a cultural oasis. We know about 40 per cent of ticket sales typically come from interstate festival goers, which not only helps to boost trade for our tourism businesses but cements South Australia as a leading events and festival destination."

Festival Director Ian Scobie said: "We are delighted to announce these amazing artists joining us in the finishing touches to our lineup, to grace the WOMADelaide stages over the March long weekend. Whether you're already a fan or getting to know these artists for the first time, WOMADelaide 2026 is ready for you."

WOMAD founder Peter Gabriel said: "It's brilliant to have an audience that cares so much about what WOMAD is, could be, and stands for. In a world in which many bad actors seem to be achieving power by fanning the flames of hatred, racism and division, a meeting place for all the world's cultures and dreams, built on mutual respect, seems all the more precious."

Tickets, the full program and festival details are available at ***womadelaide.com.au***



Time for Trivandrum: More Flights, More Comfort, More Reasons to Go

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Malaysia Airlines is expanding its Trivandrum service, making it easier than ever to travel to South India. From **1 December 2025**, the airline will operate **seven direct flights per week** from Kuala Lumpur to Trivandrum, offering more flexibility for Australians connecting via KLIA.

As part of the Time for Trivandrum campaign, Malaysia Airlines is offering **all-in return fares from just $749***. These promotional fares are available to book until **23 November 2025**, with travel valid through to **31 August 2026**. There are **no blackout dates**, so travellers can plan around school holidays, weddings, or family visits with ease.

Trivandrum, also known as Thiruvananthapuram, is Kerala's capital and a welcoming entry point to South India. It offers a gentler pace, ideal for first-time visitors as well as regular travellers heading home. Just outside the city, the **beaches of Kovalam** offer golden sands and palm-lined shores perfect for sunrise swims or relaxed sunset strolls.

A few hours away, the **hill stations around Kochi** such as Munnar and Vagamon provide cooler air, tea gardens, and quiet retreats. The **Kerala backwaters**, known for their iconic houseboats and peaceful canals, are within reach too, offering a unique glimpse into traditional village life.

For those interested in culture and wellbeing, Trivandrum delivers on both. The **Padmanabhaswamy Temple**, with its rich history and architectural splendour, is one of the most revered in the region. Kerala is also known globally as a centre for **Ayurveda**, attracting visitors who seek rejuvenation through ancient therapies, yoga, and holistic healing.

This expanded route comes with an upgraded flying experience. Selected flights will be operated by the airline's **new Airbus A330neo**, designed with both comfort and modern technology in mind. Business Class passengers will enjoy fully flat beds with privacy doors, wireless charging, and direct aisle access. Economy Class travellers will benefit from ergonomic seating, more stowage, coat hooks, and a refreshed cabin design.

All passengers will have access to **complimentary Wi-Fi** and a newly enhanced in-flight entertainment system, featuring **4K screens** (17.3-inch in Business, 13.3-inch in Economy) and **Bluetooth pairing** for personalised device use.

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With more flights, greater comfort, and a travel window stretching into next year, now is the perfect time to rediscover South India.

BOOKS

From Bombay to Bondi:

The journey of Indian-Jewish recipes

A new cookbook uncovers the unique culinary heritage of India's Baghdadi Jews who made Bondi their home

BHUSHAN SALUNKE
@the_indian_sun

Baghdadi Jews from India, mostly Bombay and Calcutta, began arriving in Australia in the late 1940s. Many settled in Sydney's eastern suburbs, especially Bondi.

The book *Indian-Jewish Food: Recipes and Stories from the Backstreets of Bondi* by Elana Benjamin captures the spectacular—but little-known—cuisine of India's Baghdadi Jews who immigrated to Australia in the 1950s and 60s.

By incorporating Indian spices into traditional Iraqi dishes and following the Jewish dietary laws—which prohibit the mixing of meat and dairy—India's Baghdadi Jews created a delicious cuisine that isn't quite typical Indian.

The collection of recipes in this book is in five



Elana Benjamin





sections: Sides, Vegetarian, Fish & Chicken, Meat, and Sweet. Recipes include chakla bakla (pickled vegetables), cheese samoosas (cheese-filled pastries), chittarnee (tomato-based chicken curry) and chatpatay (chickpeas and potatoes in tamarind sauce).

The book also tells the story of Eze Moses' legendary Bondi spice shop. Eze Moses was a Baghdadi Jew from India, and for many years, his shop was a magnet for all Indian immigrants—Jewish and otherwise.

Waverley Mayor Paula Masselos said that Waverley Council was delighted to support the creation of Elana's book through its Small Grants program. "Our heritage is fundamental to who we are as a community. This story illustrates and celebrates our multicultural past and present, and gives us a resource for the future."

Award-winning author and food literacy advocate, Alice Zaslavsky, said the book "is full of robustly researched and beautifully written memories and explorations of Jewish cuisine in the subcontinent." Zaslavsky added that "this vibrantly photographed and designed book will help to expand our understanding of regional differences and similarities—and I've already bookmarked a bunch of recipes to try!"

Elana Benjamin is a Jewish-Australian writer of Indian-Iraqi heritage and a home cook. Her writing has been published widely, including in *Good Weekend*, *Sunday Life*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *SBS Voices*, *The Jewish Independent* and *Tablet Magazine*.

Elana is a contributor to the Growing Up Indian in Australia *anthology (2024, Black Inc.). She is also the author of* My Mother's Spice Cupboard: A Journey from Baghdad to Bombay to Bondi *(2012, Hybrid Publishers). Indian-Jewish Food was recently a dual finalist in the (international) Next Generation Indie Book Awards 2025—in two categories: best cookbook, and best overall design.*

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This project was made possible with support from the Sydney Jewish Museum & Waverley Council

Best of Home Care takes out diversity and inclusion award

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The **Casey Business Awards** returned on 14 November Friday night with a full house of owners, staff and supporters turning out to recognise the enterprises shaping one of Victoria's fastest growing regions. The evening brought together a wide mix of industries, from health care to early learning, tech, brewing and retail, with organisers describing the event as a reminder of how much local business drives the city's growth.

Doogood Australia was named Business of the TURN TO #41



Care team celebrating their Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Business Awards 2025. Photo: Backing Business in Casey

CONTINUED FROM #40 Year after earlier receiving the Excellence in Innovation award. Judges praised the breadth of work being delivered across the winning categories, reflecting the strong competition and the pace of change in the region.

Best of Home Care took home the Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion award. The team attended with staff and supporters, and their response on the night showed how much the recognition meant for a service built on personal care and community trust.

In a message shared after the awards, the organisation said the achievement belonged to its entire network. "This recognition belongs to our entire BHC family — our staff, clients, partners, and community who trust and support us every single day. A heartfelt thank you to the City of Casey for recognising our efforts and the work we do within the community. We are truly honoured. We are proud, humbled, and inspired to keep raising the standard of care across our community. Here's to growth, impact, and many more milestones ahead."



Other winners included My Expert Australia for Excellence in Community and Customer Support, Berwick Twinkle Star Early Learning Centre for Excellence in Environmental Sustainability, L'ada Soaps & Scents for Best Micro Business, Boutique Hearing for Best New Business, and Lachie Fyfe from Thirty Eight O Six Brewing as Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

The awards are supported by the City of Casey and a group of sponsors including platinum partner Zeemo, gold sponsors Five Farms by Frasers Property, VentraIP Australia, St John of God Health Care Berwick and Casey Leisure, and silver sponsors Atura Dandenong, Chisholm Institute and Recovery in Mind.



Metricon brings Diwali to life with colour, food and community spirit

Metricon celebrated Diwali *with community, culture, food & warmth, transforming its Doulton 56 display home into a vibrant gathering of families, influencers & guests*

Metricon

MasterChef Australia 2021 winner Justin Narayan was the evening's drawcard

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Metricon marked Diwali with an evening that blended warmth, food and cultural celebration at its Doulton 56 display home in Burwood East. More than 80 guests filled the space, turning the luxury home into a lively gathering point for families, influencers and community members who came to share the Festival of Lights.

Guests were welcomed with the kind of hospitality the festival is known for. **<TURN TO #44>**





Justin Narayan





> Events like this highlight Metricon's passion for creating homes that bring people together, places where culture, connection, and celebration can thrive
>
> **DREW GLASCOTT, METRICON'S GENERAL MANAGER, SALES & MARKETING**

❮CONTINUED FROM #43❯ Bollywood dancers set the tone early, followed by henna artists and craft activities for children that kept the evening moving at an easy pace. The house itself became part of the experience, with the two-storey setting offering a calm backdrop to the colour and music.

MasterChef Australia 2021 winner Justin Narayan was the evening's drawcard, running a hands-on cooking session featuring dishes that reflected both comfort and heritage. He said the opportunity meant a great deal to him. "It was a privilege to share my love of food and culture at the event. Food is such a powerful way to connect people, and Diwali is all about celebrating family, friendship, and community. It was fantastic to see everyone come together to share great flavours and experience the warmth of this festival."

Actor and influencer Sharon Johal was among those attending, sharing glimpses of the gathering with her online audience and helping extend the celebration beyond the room.

For Metricon, the event was a chance to open its doors in a different way. Drew Glascott, Metricon's General Manager, Sales & Marketing, said the night captured what the company aims to foster. "The event was such a meaningful way to celebrate cultural diversity with our fantastic customers while showcasing one of Metricon's most impressive homes. Diwali is such a joyful celebration of light, love, and togetherness, and we're proud to open our doors to celebrate that spirit with our community. ❮TURN TO #45❯

CONTINUED FROM #44

Events like this highlight Metricon's passion for creating homes that bring people together, places where culture, connection, and celebration can thrive."

The event reflected a growing trend of major brands taking part in cultural moments that matter to the communities they serve. For many attendees, it was simply a chance to slow down, enjoy good food, and connect with others under the glow of Diwali.



Diljit Dosanjh

Australian music pushes further into India with new industry delegation

Australia deepens cultural & commercial music ties with India as Sounds Australia announces a major new opportunity at **India International Music Week 2026**

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Australia's music sector is preparing for a fresh chapter of engagement with India after Sounds Australia, alongside the Australian Consulate General to Mumbai, confirmed a new opportunity for artist managers to take part in India **International Music Week in 2026**.

The announcement closed this morning's India-focussed VMDO event, marking a renewed effort to strengthen creative and commercial ties with one of the world's busiest music markets. Expressions of interest are open for Association of Artist Managers members keen to join a select Australian delegation travelling to Mumbai for next year's conference and showcase festival.

India International Music Week brings together artists, executives and music businesses from across the globe. For Sounds Australia, the new program builds on earlier work in the region. Between 2012 and 2014, Australian artists were showcased in Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune, featuring names such as The Aston Shuffle, Big Scary, Cloud Control, Karnivool, Kate Miller-Heidke, Peking Duk, Sampology and Sheppard. The organisation has also led delegations to NH7 Weekender, Nokia Music Connects and All About Music, along with an inbound exchange during SXSW Sydney in 2024.

3 November 2012, Pune, Maharashtra, India: The NH7 Weekender Music Festival in Pune. Oz Fest sponsored the music festival with the Sound Chamber which had many concert goers try the facility out at the three day event while Australian act, Big Scary from Melbourne kept the crowds entertained with a rocking set. Pictures by Graham Crouch

Esti Zilber, Executive Producer for Sounds Australia, said, "Sounds Australia is excited to return to India, bringing a targeted approach that draws on 〈TURN TO #49〉

> "Over the last year, we have seen an increasing number of Australian artists and industry leaders making their mark in India's vibrant music scened
>
> **PAUL MURPHY, AUSTRALIAN CONSUL-GENERAL IN WESTERN INDIA**













CONTINUED FROM #47

our track record of connecting Australian artists with audiences and opportunities worldwide. By deepening relationships with trusted industry partners and key players in the territory, we're expanding networks that drive impactful outcomes, create lasting opportunities, and position Australian talent within one of the world's most dynamic music markets."

The week in Mumbai will include tailored networking sessions, curated panels, strategic meetings and public events, including a spotlight on Australia within the official program. Previous editions of IIMW have featured speakers from Spotify India, Believe Music, Warner Music India, Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Publishing, Amazon Studios, Netflix India, Times Music, PRS India and Skillbox, as well as festival programmers, venue operators and export offices from more than 30 countries.

The Australian Consul-General in Western India, Paul Murphy, said, "Over the last year, we have seen an increasing number of Australian artists and industry leaders making their mark in India's vibrant music scene. India's dynamic music market offers vast opportunities for collaboration with their Australian counterparts. With a strong and globally respected music industry, Australia is well positioned to foster creative partnerships and cultural exchange. To build on this momentum, we are delighted to support an Australian presence at India International Music Week 2026. This engagement will be a powerful platform to showcase the Australian music ecosystem, build networks and explore bilateral opportunities."

Victoria is set to strengthen its ties with India too. The Victorian Music Development Office has opened expressions of interest for two Victorian industry professionals working in fields beyond management, such as labels and agencies, to receive an AU$2,000 contribution to attend IIMW. The support is aimed at helping Victorian businesses gain direct access to the market, share expertise and build long-term partnerships across both communities.

Kirsty Rivers, General Manager of VMDO, said, "The VMDO is delighted to provide additional support for Sounds Australia's delegation to IIMW and look forward to supporting two Victorian professionals in attending. Indian languages are the fastest-growing languages other than English spoken in Victorian homes, and looking to India is not only an opportunity to find out more about the export market, it is a chance to build on our shared cultural connections here in Victoria."

Applications are now open.



Sahana Raghuraman

A journey shaped by devotion as Sahana prepares for her Chennai Arangetram



A young dancer's journey across countries, culture, and tradition culminates in a long-awaited arangetram grounded in dedication, family, and legacy

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Sahana Raghuraman's life has moved across borders, classrooms, and dance studios, yet the thread that holds it together has always been Bharatanatyam. Her story begins in New Zealand, where she was born and where the first hints of rhythm and storytelling took hold. At five, she walked into a dance class and felt the spark that would grow into something larger. She still remembers the sound of the mridangam and the way each gesture carried meaning far beyond movement. Under the early guidance of Dr Dhanya Sreekanth, the foundations of her dance journey were set.

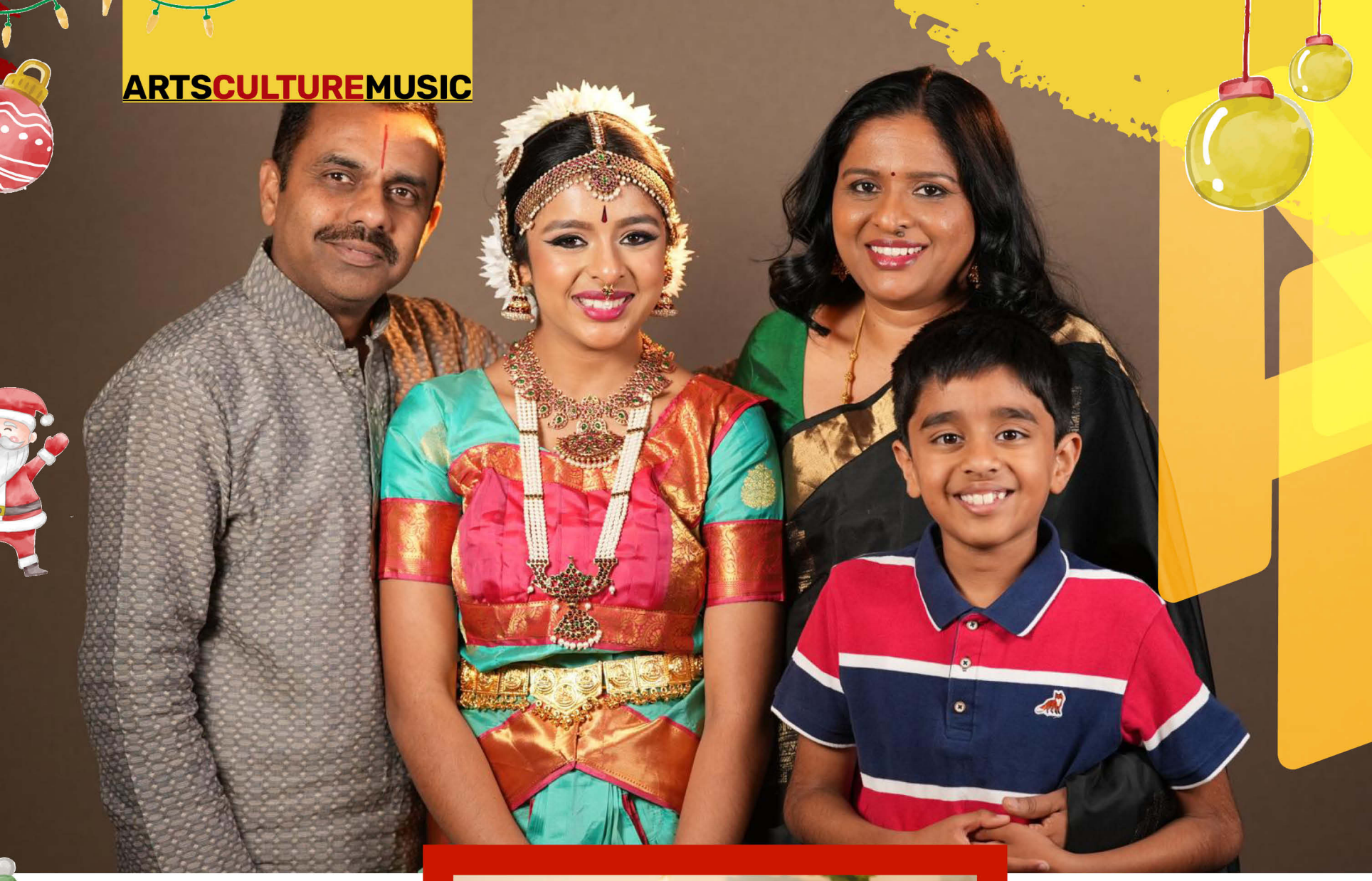
Years later, in 2019, she joined Artham Natya and began learning under her guru, Dr Bhuvana Kannan, a relationship that has shaped her understanding of Bharatanatyam with depth and purpose. Dr Bhuvana's training, grounded in classical rigour and an insistence on discipline and clarity, left a strong mark. "My love for this art started to grow," Sahana says, a reflection that sits at the heart of her long preparation for her arangetram. Guided by her guru's approach to theory, rhythm, and expression, she completed her Year 3 certification and started working towards the milestone that every dancer dreams of.

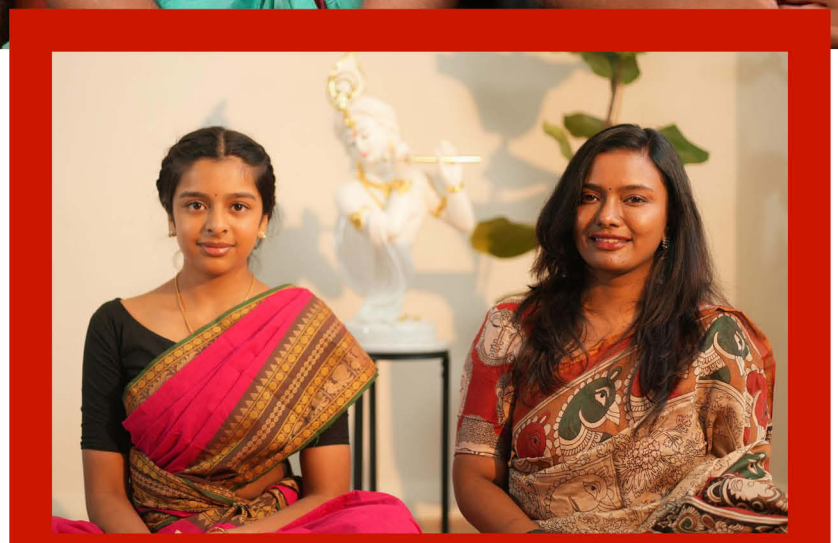
Then came a shift. Her family moved to Melbourne, and the stage she had imagined for years suddenly felt far away. The transition to online learning was difficult. "It was challenging at first," she recalls. Connecting to an ancient art form through a screen required discipline that stretched her both technically and emotionally. Yet something in her held steady. "I discovered that dedication isn't just about talent," she says. "It's about showing up again and again with heart." Through those months of remote training, she found a new way to dance, relying on persistence and trust. **<TURN TO #53>**

> "It was challenging at first. I discovered that dedication isn't just about talent. It's about showing up again and again with heart
>
> **SAHANA RAGHURAMAN**



Just as compelling as Sahana's own path is the story of the family behind her. Her parents' journeys began far from Melbourne. Her father, Raghuraman Kidambi Gopalan, grew up in Tiruttani in Tamil Nadu





CONTINUED FROM #51

Her arangetram will now take place at Rani Seethai Hall in Chennai on Saturday 10 January 2026 from 6.00 PM to 8.30 PM, accompanied by an orchestra of respected artists whose presence will lift the performance with classical richness. Every piece in her repertoire carries its own weight, its own history, and its own role in the evening she has worked towards for years. Each composition chosen for the performance reflects her grounding in the classical structure of the art: Pushpanjali in Gambira Nattai; Vishnu Kauthuvam in Nattai; Shree Rajarajeshwari Ashtakam in Raga Malika; Bo-Sambho in Revathi; Kandhan Varnam in Kamas; and a lively Thillana in Amirthavarshini. These works have been choreographed by her guru, with Kandhan Varnam arranged by Kalaimamani Guru Sri Binesh Mahadevan.

Behind her stands an ensemble of artists who will shape the experience on stage. Vocalist Smt Chitambari Krishnamkumar will lead the music, with Dr Bhuvana Kannan on nattuvangam. Sri Danamjayan on mridangam, Sri Mudikondan Ramesh on veena, Sri Deva Raj on flute, and Sri Venkatasubramaniam on rhythm pad round out the orchestra, ensuring the performance captures the full classical soundscape.

Just as compelling as Sahana's own path is the story of the family behind her. Her parents' journeys began far from Melbourne. Her father, Raghuraman Kidambi Gopalan, grew up in Tiruttani in Tamil Nadu before building a career anchored in laboratory science. His work took him from Apollo Hospitals in Chennai to Auckland, then to leading a COVID-19 laboratory team during the height of the pandemic. His commitment carried him into the commercial sector and eventually to his current role as Technical Operations Advisor at RMIT University. Her mother, Dr Pavithra Raghuraman, began her career in research at CMC Vellore, moved to New Zealand inspired by the idea of becoming a research doctor, completed her PhD at AUT, and continues working in science with equal dedication.

Sahana describes her brother Tharan as the steady current of joy in the family, the one who lifts moods, celebrates every small moment, and brings energy to everything he does. His interest in chess and cricket keeps the household lively, and she laughs when she mentions that the family is waiting for the day he brings his mridangam skills into the mix.

At the centre of all this is her guru, whose own dance lineage traces back to Kalaimamani Smt Ranganayaki Jayaraman of Sri Saraswathi Gana Nilayam in Chennai. Dr Bhuvana's training across India and her experience performing on global stages make her influence clear in her students' approach to expression, movement, and thought. Her teaching draws from the Natyasastra and Abhinaya Darpanam, demanding not just performance but understanding. She brings her experience as a Creative New Zealand award recipient, lecturer, panellist, and reviewer into her classes, shaping dancers with a strong sense of discipline and curiosity.

Sahana's upcoming arangetram is a reflection of all these strands. Her own perseverance, her family's enduring support, and her guru's guidance come together in a performance that marks transition as much as achievement. She has danced on stages in Auckland and Melbourne, explored styles from classical to hip-hop, and even begun choreographing. Along the way she has taught herself instruments including guitar and ukulele and studied Carnatic vocal music, finding ways to bring rhythm into her everyday life.

The night in Chennai will be a culmination of years of practice, but also something more: a connection back to where her family's stories began, a return to the city where her parents' scientific journeys started, and a stage that links her to the tradition she spent her life honouring.


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Young performers bring Mahabharata alive in Melbourne



A vibrant cultural celebration where young performers brought the spirit of **Sri Krishna Raayabaaaram** to life

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Sri Krishna Raayabaaaram was staged on Saturday, 22 November 2025, at 3 pm at the Banksia Performing Arts Centre at Keysborough Secondary College, Janine Road, Springvale South. The hall filled with families and community members who had come to watch Abhyudaya's young performers take on one of the most challenging stories in the Mahabharata. The scale of the production, and the response it drew, reflected how much the event meant to the children who had worked on it and the parents who had guided them.

Abhyudaya describes its purpose with clarity. Its vision is "to nurture, preserve, and promote the rich heritage of Indian performing arts by empowering children and young individuals to express their creativity with confidence, discipline, and cultural pride". The organisation hopes to build a wider platform where children from across the community can carry their stories to major stages. It aims to involve families, cultural organisations, and teachers so that the next generation grows with artistic ability and a sense of belonging.

Its mission is built around structured training, skilled guidance, and the chance to perform at multicultural festivals, theatres, conventions, and international venues. It places equal weight on teamwork, confidence, discipline, and communication. Teaching mythological stories in ways that children enjoy is seen as a key part of passing culture forward.

The organisers wrote that Sri Krishna Raayabaaaram "was not just a skit, it was a grand celebration of dedication, discipline, passion, and the richness of our cultural heritage brought alive on stage". The children moved through their dialogue and padyams with ease, drawing admiration from the crowd. Families 〈TURN TO #57〉



The stage design, props, and costumes echoed the world of the Mahabharata, and the audience reacted strongly to every shift in mood



CONTINUED FROM #55 spoke about the work that went into each scene, from rehearsals to costume preparation, and the pride of seeing their children respond to such demanding material.

The stage design, props, and costumes echoed the world of the Mahabharata, and the audience reacted strongly to every shift in mood. The team recalled how "the hall echoed with continuous cheers, applause, and emotions and a Standing Ovation a clear reflection of the production's massive success". The response showed how closely the performers connected with the story and with the viewers.

The event was supported by a wide network of community partners, including the Telugu Association of Australia Inc. (TAAI), Australia Telangana Association Incorporation, Australia Telugu Community and Cultural Centre, Melbourne Telagana Forum, Australia India Chamber of Commerce, Telugumalli, KIW World, and Australia Alludu. Sponsors ranged from legal and financial firms to builders and business groups. Many local music academies, dance schools, artists, and volunteers contributed to the production.

The organisers expressed their appreciation to parents, partners, supporters, and volunteers, thanking them for making the staging possible. They added, "Here's to many more cultural milestones together", setting the tone for what they hope will be a long journey of nurturing young performers across Victoria.









Parramatta student earns national honour



Andrew Charlton MP, the federal member for Parramatta shared the news: "We are so proud of Parramatta local and Macarthur Girls High School student Shruthi, who is one of only 25 students in the country to win the Australian Olympic Changemaker Award"

OUR REPORTER
𝕏 @the_indian_sun

Parramatta has a new young leader to celebrate. Macarthur Girls High School student Shruthi has been named one of only 25 students nationwide to receive the Australian Olympic Changemaker Award, a program run by the Australian Olympic Committee to recognise teenagers who embody the values of friendship, respect, and the pursuit of excellence through sport.

Andrew Charlton MP, the federal member for Parramatta shared the news: “We are so proud of Parramatta local and Macarthur Girls High School student Shruthi, who is one of only 25 students in the country to win the Australian Olympic Changemaker Award. The Award is given to students who embody Olympic values and demonstrate outstanding initiative and leadership within their school communities What an incredible achievement! Young people like Shruthi are leaders of the future. Congratulations.”

The national program gathers students from across Australia who use sport to inspire healthier choices, build social connections, or take on challenges that matter in their communities. Schools can put forward two students each year, and all nominees are invited to forums where they meet Olympians and share ideas with other young leaders. From those forums, a smaller group is chosen to attend the National Summit in Canberra, where they work with athletes and contribute directly to the Olympic Committee’s youth programs. Shruthi’s selection places her among a group of emerging leaders shaping the future of sport and community engagement.

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