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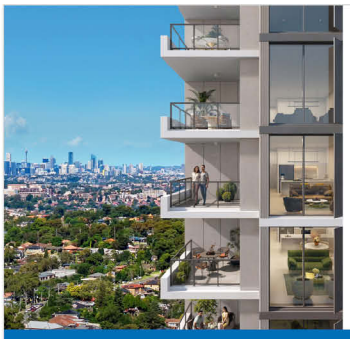
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Inside the pressure teachers face beyond the school day



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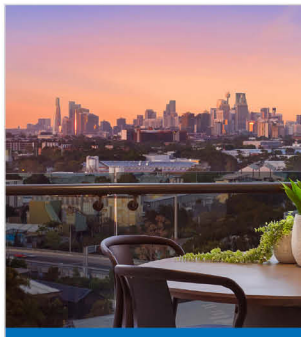
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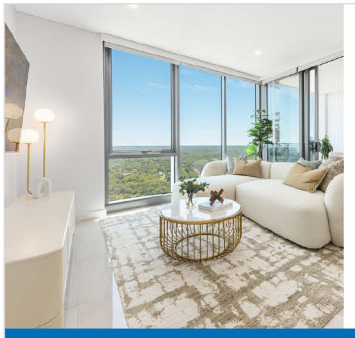
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A Break, & a Reality Check



Dear Readers,

Easter arrives with the end of Term 1, and for many families, that means a welcome pause. School bags are set aside, alarms come off early mornings, and routines loosen for a couple of weeks. It is a familiar rhythm in Australia. A reset before the year gathers pace again.

For students, the break is real. For many teachers, it is partial at best.

Our cover story this month looks at what sits behind the school day. The work that continues after the bell, often late into the night. Planning lessons, marking, responding to parents, documenting student needs. None of it is new, but the volume has changed. Expectations have grown, and much of that growth has been absorbed quietly.

The recent strike in Victoria brought some of that into public view. Pay is part of the discussion, but it is not the whole story. What teachers describe is a job that has expanded well beyond the classroom. More roles, more accountability, more follow-up. At the same time, the system still leans on goodwill to keep things moving.

There is no sense of people giving up. If anything, the opposite. Teachers still talk about their students first. They still show up, still invest, still care about outcomes. That is what makes the current moment difficult. The pressure is rising, and so is the expectation that it will continue to be managed without much change.

Away from schools, the past few weeks have been shaped by events that feel far away, but are not. More than 10,000 Australians have returned home from the Middle East since tensions escalated earlier this month. Commercial flights have carried most of them back, with others making their way through Europe and Asia.

It is a large number in a short time. It reflects both the seriousness of the situation and the effort required to keep routes open. Australians still in the region have been advised to leave while they can. Conditions can change quickly, and travel options can narrow without much notice.

For families here, these are not abstract developments. They affect relatives, friends and colleagues, often at short notice. It is a reminder of how closely connected things have become, even when events unfold thousands of kilometres away.

There are, however, other stories that point in a different direction. A Queensland student, now heading into medicine, has built a platform to help others navigate the same path. What began as a personal project has turned into a structured guide for medical school applications across Australia.

It brings together information that is usually scattered. Entry requirements, testing, deadlines, different systems across states. For students without access to networks or guidance, that complexity can be a barrier. Simplifying it does not solve everything, but it does make the process more transparent.

Work like this often starts small. A spreadsheet, a simple idea, a gap noticed from personal experience. Over time, it grows into something others can use. It reflects a practical kind of initiative, one that responds to a problem rather than waiting for a system to adjust.

A similar approach is showing up in research and industry. A joint trial involving Australia's CSIRO and the Indian Institute of Science has tested whether agricultural waste can be used in steel production. Early results suggest it can.

Rice husk pellets were introduced into existing systems as a partial replacement for coal. The process held up. Output remained stable. Emissions were lower. It is still early work, but it points to a way of using what is already available, rather than relying entirely on new infrastructure.

Steel is one of the hardest sectors to clean up. It accounts for a large share of global emissions, and in countries like India, coal remains central to production. Finding alternatives that can work within existing systems matters. Biomass is not a complete answer, but it could become part of the mix.

There is also a secondary benefit. Agricultural waste is often burned in open fields, contributing to air pollution. Using it in industry could address both issues if supply chains and costs can be managed.

These stories and more make up our April edition. They reflect a range of issues and challenges and offer plenty to think about as the term draws to a close.

Easter does not resolve any of this. It does, however, offer a pause.

For students, it is time away from school. For parents, a break from the daily routine. For teachers, hopefully some space to step back after a demanding term, even if the work does not completely stop.

We wish all our readers a safe and restful Easter and a refreshing break before Term 2 begins.

Best wishes,
SIDDHARTH SURESH

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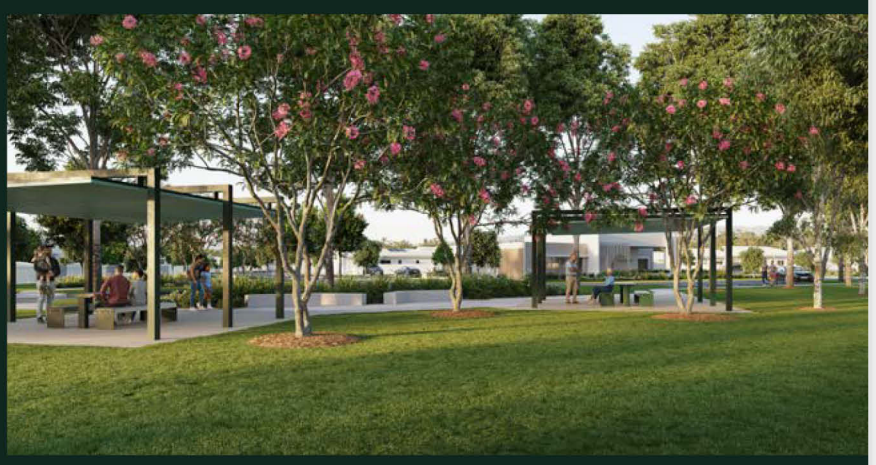
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UPAA community gathers for Holi celebration at Jells Park

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Members of the **Uttar Pradesh Association of Australia** gathered at Jells Park in Melbourne to celebrate **Holi**, with more than 130 participants attending the community event.

The gathering brought together families and community members for a morning of colour, food and social interaction, as the association continues efforts to maintain cultural traditions and strengthen connections within the diaspora.

In a statement, organisers thanked the community for its support.

The organisers ❮TURN TO #11❯



The gathering comes as Victoria remains home to one of the largest Indian communities in the country, with more than 370,000

<CONTINUED FROM #10> thanked members for their support and enthusiasm in coming together to celebrate UP-wali Holi in Melbourne, saying it meant a great deal to see the community united like one family.

More than 130 participants attended the gathering, with food arrangements made for around 130 people. Participants gathered at the park at 11:30 AM. Jells Park provided space for families to celebrate the festival of colours together.

Community members contributed colours for the celebration, adding to the 3.5 kg already arranged by organisers.

The gathering comes as Victoria remains home to one of the largest Indian communities in the country, with more than 370,000 people identifying with Indian ancestry across the state.

Jells Park provided space for families to celebrate the festival of colours together









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TAFE VICTORIA



Colours and community spirit at Holi in West celebration in Point Cook

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Crowds gathered at Parkwood Terrace Playground in Point Cook on 7 March for Holi in West, a community celebration organised by **Bongosathi** in partnership with **Cr Pradeep Tiwari** and **Jashan Foundation**.

The free public event ran from 11am to 6pm and brought together families and residents from across Melbourne's western suburbs. Activities included organic colour play, music and dance performances, food stalls, market stalls and activities for children.

Organisers said the event aimed to create a space where local residents could celebrate Holi while connecting with neighbours and community groups. Participants registered for free entry and were provided with organic, skin-safe colours at the venue.

Bongosathi founder Dr Rabindra Nath Shaw was acknowledged for leading the event, which was supported by community organisations and sponsors including Ray White 〈TURN TO #13〉



CONTINUED FROM #12 Point Cook, Aussizz Group and several local businesses.

Organisers described the gathering as a moment of shared celebration for the area's growing multicultural community.

"Huge congratulations to Bongosathi and its founder Dr. Rabindra Nath Shaw, for organizing such a wonderful Holi (Holi in West) along with Cr Pradeep Tiwari and Jashan Foundation in Point Cook," organisers said.

"It was a fantastic free community event filled with energy, colours, music, foods and happiness. The atmosphere was amazing, and it was beautiful to see so many people from the community coming together and enjoying the celebrations."

Community leaders and public representatives attended the event and met with residents throughout the day.

The gathering was attended by Mathew Hilakari MP, Wyndham City councillors Susan McIntyre and Larry, and Mr Hemant from the Consulate General of India. Guests addressed the crowd and interacted with local families during the celebration.

"The event was further honoured by the great presence of Mathew Hilakari MP and Cr Susan McIntyre, Mr Hemant from CGI and Cr Larry who spoke at the Holi celebration and warmly met and greeted members of the local community. Their presence made the event even more special."

Food vendors and cultural groups from across the region participated in the program, while children's activities and music performances continued through the afternoon.

Organisers said the aim was to encourage community participation and cultural exchange in Melbourne's western suburbs.

"Events like these truly bring people closer and strengthen community spirit. Keep up the great work and continue serving the community with such wonderful free events—wishing you all continued success."

The event concluded with organisers thanking residents and volunteers who helped deliver the celebration.

"Thank you once again to everyone who attended and supported the event. Let's continue building a strong and united community."





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Holi celebrations draw crowds to Carrum Downs temple

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Holi celebrations on March 7 drew families and community members to the Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs, one of Victoria's largest Hindu temple complexes.

Members of Melbourne's Hindu community gathered at the temple grounds through the day to mark the festival, which is widely observed across India and by diaspora communities around the world. The event featured traditional celebrations associated with Holi, including music, cultural activities and the throwing of coloured powder.

Victorian Opposition Leader Jess Wilson and Liberal MP Evan Mulholland were among those who attended the gathering and spent time with families and organisers at the temple. 〈TURN TO #15〉

Victorian Opposition Leader Jess Wilson and Liberal MP Evan Mulholland were among those who attended the gathering and spent time with families and organisers at the temple





CONTINUED FROM #14

The Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple, operated by the Hindu Society of Victoria, has long served as a focal point for Hindu religious and cultural life in the state. The temple complex regularly hosts major festivals and attracts visitors from across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Holi marks the arrival of spring in the Hindu calendar and is often associated with community gatherings where participants celebrate with colours, food and cultural programmes.

Saturday's event at Carrum Downs brought together devotees, families and visitors who travelled from different parts of metropolitan Melbourne to take part in the annual celebration. The temple grounds were filled with colour as participants joined in the traditional colour play that forms a central part of Holi festivities.





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Melbourne marks Holi and Gangaur with Rajasthani community celebration

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Melbourne's Rajasthani community gathered on Sunday, 15 March at the Diggers Rest Community Pavilion in Victoria for a cultural celebration marking the traditional festivals of Holi and Gangaur, bringing together residents and guests from a range of backgrounds for a day of music, food and community activities.

The event was organised by the **Association of Australian Rajasthani's Inc.**, 〈TURN TO #17〉

Association of Australian Rajasthani's Inc. hosted the celebration to highlight traditions from the Indian state of Rajasthan



CONTINUED FROM #16 which hosted the celebration to highlight traditions from the Indian state of Rajasthan while encouraging wider cultural participation.

Community members took part in performances and festivities reflecting Rajasthani customs. The programme included music and cultural presentations, with attendees participating throughout the day. Guests were also served traditional Rajasthani dishes prepared by Mithaiwala.

Association President Virendra Khatana thanked those who attended and supported the gathering. He acknowledged the presence of local councillors Cr Pradeep Tiwari and Cr John Verdon, along with Head of Chancery Tej Krishan from the Indian Consulate.

Khatana also recognised the broader community for their participation and support during the event. He thanked sponsors, the planning team and members of the working committee who assisted with organising the celebration.

The gathering focused on sharing cultural traditions linked to Holi and Gangaur while providing an opportunity for community members and visitors to interact and learn about Rajasthani customs in an Australian setting.











Cairns marks Holi with colour and community gathering



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Cairns residents gathered at McKenzie Street Parklands on Saturday for the **Cairns Holi Festival—Festival of Colours**, organised by **GOPIO Cairns Inc,** bringing families and visitors together for a morning of music, colour play and food.

The event ran from 10:00am to 2:00pm and attracted people from across the region who joined in celebrating Holi, the traditional Indian festival that marks the arrival of spring and is known for its use of coloured powders shared among participants.

Music from a local DJ played throughout the event as attendees took part in the colour celebrations and spent time with family and friends in the parklands.

"This event was about bringing the community together," said a spokesperson from GOPIO Cairns

〈TURN TO #19〉

CONTINUED FROM #18 Inc. “It was wonderful to see people from many different backgrounds celebrating culture, enjoying the music, and sharing the spirit of Holi.”

Families and visitors moved through the park while children and adults alike took part in the colour play, which is widely associated with Holi celebrations around the world.

Food trucks, including Satiable and Momo Express, served a range of dishes during the gathering, offering attendees a variety of options throughout the day.

Organisers said the event reflected the community spirit of the festival and the diverse make-up of Cairns.

“Holi is a celebration of colour, joy, and community. Seeing so many smiling faces enjoying the festival together was truly special,” the organisers said.

GOPIO Cairns Inc acknowledged the volunteers, vendors and supporters who assisted with the event and helped organise the day’s activities.

The organisation said it hopes the festival will continue to grow as an annual multicultural celebration in Cairns, encouraging connections among residents and sharing cultural traditions with the wider community.







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Cairns marks Holi with colour and community gathering

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The vibrant festival of Holi brought together the **Mackay community** in a joyful celebration of colour, culture and togetherness earlier this month—proving that even unexpected challenges cannot dampen community spirit.

Originally scheduled for 8 March, the event had to be postponed due to unfavourable weather conditions. While the uncertainty created some anxious moments for organisers, the decision to move the celebration to 15 March ultimately proved to be the right one.

And it paid off.

On the day, nearly 230 to 250 people from across the Mackay region gathered to celebrate, turning the occasion into a lively and memorable community event filled with colour, music, laughter and connection.

For Sandhya Sorout and her family, who have been organising Holi celebrations in Mackay for over five years, the event represents something far deeper than just a festival.

"Holi holds a very ❮TURN TO #21❯













<CONTINUED FROM #20> special place in our hearts. It's more than just a festival—it's a celebration of colour, equality, joy and togetherness," Sandhya shared.

A dentist by profession, Sandhya, along with her husband Brijesh, an engineer, and their two children, have made it their mission to keep Indian traditions alive within the regional community. Having lived in Mackay for the past 13 years, their efforts have grown into a much-anticipated annual gathering that welcomes people from all backgrounds.

Despite the initial weather setback, the rescheduled event turned into a vibrant success, with families, friends and community members coming together to enjoy music, dancing and the iconic colours of Holi.

"The laughter, dancing, colours and the incredible energy everyone brought made the day truly unforgettable," Sandhya said.

What makes the Mackay Holi celebration particularly special is its grassroots nature—driven by the passion of one family, yet embraced by an entire community. It stands as a powerful example of how cultural traditions can thrive even in regional Australia, fostering inclusion, awareness and a strong sense of belonging.

The organisers expressed heartfelt gratitude to everyone who attended and supported the event, while also acknowledging the learning that comes with hosting community gatherings.

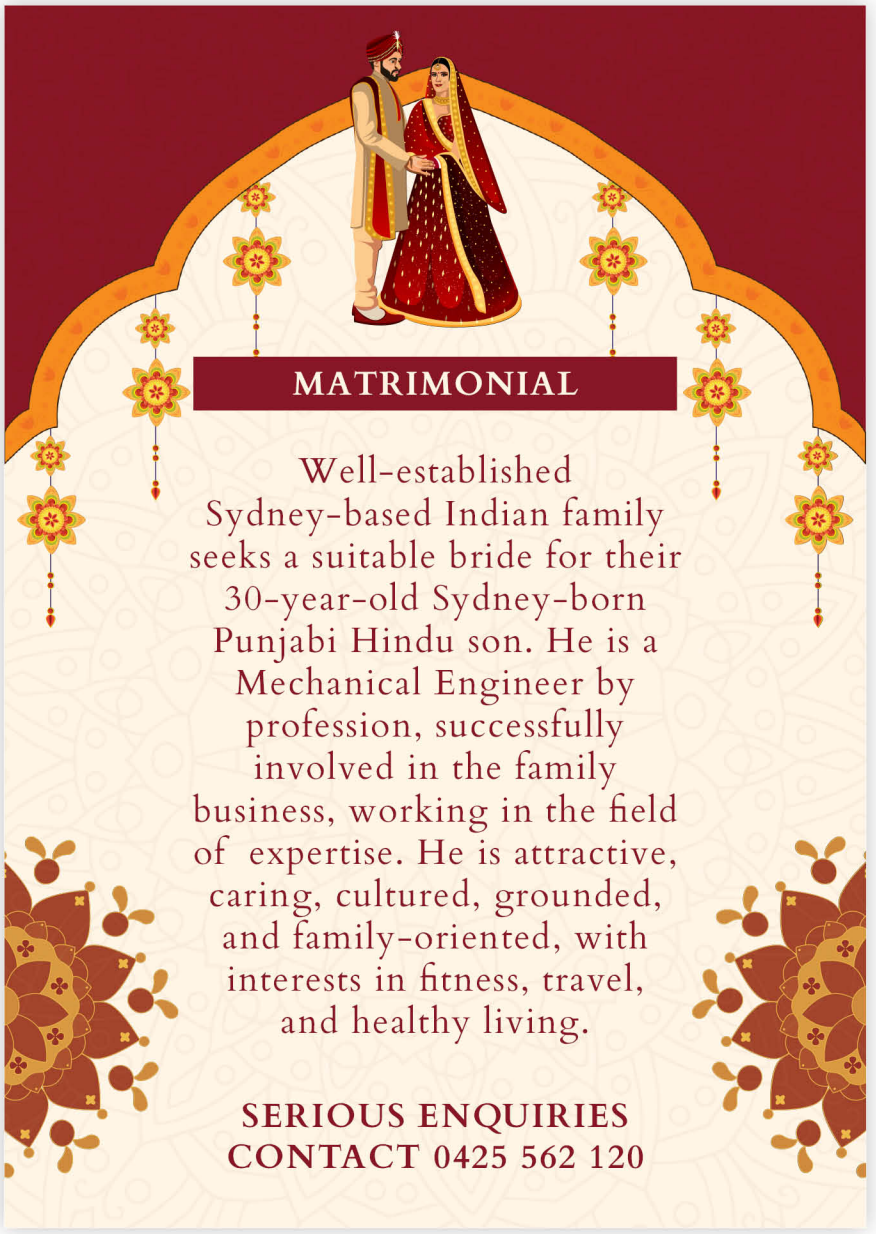
"If there were any shortcomings on our part, we sincerely apologise and appreciate everyone's understanding. Events like these are always a learning journey for us," Sandhya added.

As the colours settled and the music faded, what remained were lasting memories and a renewed sense of connection.

In a regional town like Mackay, this celebration was more than just a festival—it was a reminder that community, culture and togetherness can flourish anywhere.

The colours may fade, but the spirit of Holi continues to brighten the hearts of all who took part.





Gold Coast teen reaches national finals of Miss Teen Galaxy Australia



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A 15-year-old student from the Gold Coast hinterland has been selected as a national finalist in the **Miss Teen Galaxy Australia 2026** competition and will travel to Sydney to compete against contestants from across the country.

Abhilasha, known to friends and family as Abby, lives in Tallai and attends Somerset College. Born in England and raised on the Gold Coast, she says growing up in the hinterland has shaped her outlook.

The teenager shares her home with her parents and two Cavoodles and describes the natural surroundings of Tallai as a constant source of inspiration.

Her selection places her among finalists from across Australia who will compete for the national title and the opportunity to progress to international competition.

For Abby, however, the experience carries a purpose beyond the stage.

She has created a platform called The Cancer Cause, which focuses on raising awareness about cancer and supporting survivors, caregivers and families affected by the disease.

The initiative is linked to a personal experience that shaped her at a young age.

Abby lost her only uncle to cancer during childhood, an event she says influenced her decision to speak publicly about the impact of the illness on families.

"Cancer affects not just the person diagnosed but entire families," Abby says. "I want to use every opportunity I have to raise awareness and support those who are going through it."

Her introduction to pageantry happened unexpectedly when she first walked the ramp at an event in Melbourne. What began as a casual interest soon developed into a broader commitment.

"Pageantry has helped me shape my personality and confidence," she says. "It's given me the courage to speak up for causes that matter."

Outside competition preparations, Abby maintains a full schedule as a student at Somerset College.

She is involved in dance, enjoys public speaking and continues to focus on her studies while preparing for the national finals.

Her long-term goal reflects the same focus on helping others that drives her advocacy work.

Abby hopes to pursue a career in clinical psychology, with an interest in supporting people facing emotional and mental health challenges.

While the upcoming finals in Sydney mark an important moment in her journey, Abby says her goals extend beyond titles or recognition.

"I want my voice to make a difference," she says. "If I can inspire even a few people or help families going through difficult times, then everything I do in pageantry will be worth it."

As she prepares for the national competition, Abby's campaign highlights how young participants in pageantry are increasingly linking the platform to personal causes and community awareness.

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From Vietnam to Punjab: Five men rethink masculinity

INDIRA LAISRAM
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They sat in a row across the front of the room. Five men from five different cultural backgrounds, each with a story that had brought them to the same place.

Nam, Kin, Amit, Alan and Ahmed had just watched themselves on screen, their faces filling the room as they spoke in their own languages about the pressures of being a man. Now they sat before a live audience at Footscray Community Arts Centre, being asked to go deeper.

As part of the **What Kind Of Man Do You Want To Be? campaign**—led by Respect Victoria in partnership with The Open Arms, Array Productions and Polaron Connect—the panel on 23 March turned the spotlight from the screen to the self.

Moderated by Belle Kwan, General Manager at Polaron, the conversation moved beyond the videos into lived experience—childhood memories, family expectations, and the quiet ways men learn what it means to be "strong".

> If we don't show our emotions, it builds up inside and comes out as anger. That's where problems begin
>
> **AMIT**

Nam grew up in a Vietnamese household where anger and fear sat alongside love.

"As a child, you don't question that. You absorb it. You carry it with you into adulthood," he said. "It was not uncommon to have plates and knives flying around the house."

Everything changed after he suffered a severe brain injury. "That experience stripped everything back… strength is not control. It's being humble. It's being vulnerable. It's allowing yourself to ask for help when you need it."

Years later, when he lost his job, that belief was tested again. His wife became the main financial provider.

Now, with a baby on the way, his focus is simple—showing up differently. "The way we show up can either create safety or take it away," he said.

Kin's story came from a very different place, but landed in a similar space. Growing up in Hong Kong, masculinity was shaped by what he saw on screen.

"Gangsters, criminals—that was the cool thing we watched. That became our role model," he said.

Panelists during the What Kind of Man Do You Want to Be? campaign discussion, moderated by Belle Kwan on Monday at at Footscray Community Arts Centre

Today, as a father of two, that worries him. "A friend told me some young people commit crime because it looks cool on TikTok. That really scares me."

His idea of strength has changed. "True masculinity is discipline… supporting your wife, changing nappies, caring for your children," he said.

And perhaps most importantly, reflection. "We look in the mirror before we go out, but we don't always reflect on what we say or do. That's just as important."

Amit's story sat somewhere between tradition and quiet rebellion. From India's Punjabi community, he designs clothes, acts, and works full-time as an engineer.

"Sometimes no one tells men how to be human—only how to be 'a man'," he said.

His turning point came when his father had a stroke. "He was always there for the community, but somewhere along the way, his own health and family 〈TURN TO #25〉

CONTINUED FROM #24 were neglected."

That stayed with him. "It's okay to pause. It's okay to be vulnerable. It's okay to say you are not okay."

For him, responsibility is about shifting from control to connection. "If we don't show our emotions, it builds up inside and comes out as anger. That's where problems begin."

Alan, a high school teacher, brought the conversation back to the next generation.

"I see young people every day... young men have emotions—they just don't always feel safe expressing them," he said.

Coming from a traditional Chinese background, he said many men are still expected to fit a fixed idea of masculinity.

But he wants that to change. "Men should be able to be what they want to be. They can be vulnerable, and they can be strong."

He said the conversations are already starting. "When someone says, 'I'm struggling', we should never look down on them. We should listen."

Ahmed, a university student and the youngest on the panel, spoke about the pressure many young men feel today—especially online.

"Everything on social media is exaggerated. It's always at the extremes," he said.



But he was clear: masculinity itself is not the problem. "We're not saying masculinity is bad. We're saying when it becomes toxic—that's when it becomes harmful."

For him, the campaign is about representation. "I wanted someone who looks like me, who speaks my language, to say it's okay to have these conversations."

And about everyday actions. "It's about how you carry yourself... checking in on someone, saying 'I'm here for you'—that matters."

As the panel wrapped up, Belle asked what they hoped their communities would take away.

Nam said normal doesn't always mean healthy. Kin spoke about drawing strength from both culture and life in Australia. Amit called for breaking harmful masculine moulds. Alan wanted more respect within families. Ahmed kept it simple—it's okay to reach out and it's okay to be vulnerable.

Through it all, one idea kept returning: change doesn't begin in big speeches or policies, but in small, everyday choices.

"Change doesn't just happen in private," Nam said. "It happens in community."

By the end, there were no easy answers. Just five men, from five different communities, asking the same question—and inviting others to do the same. What kind of man do you want to be?

The campaign videos are available online, with the full set of stories featuring 14 Victorian men rolling out in coming weeks.





Guests enjoy the first servings at the Narre Warren opening, bringing the space to life

More Than Food, It's Community: Saravanaa Bhavan grows in Melbourne

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

For anyone who grew up with the scent of sizzling idlis, the gentle crackle of a freshly made dosa, or the deep, comforting richness of a cup of filter coffee, some flavours are more than just food. They are memories. And this week, those memories came a little closer to home for two Melbourne communities.

Saravanaa Bhavan, a name that carries a certain familiarity for many in the Indian diaspora, opened two new outlets in quick succession—Narre Warren on March 19 and Truganina on March 20—bringing its total number of restaurants in Victoria to five.

The expansion into Melbourne's suburbs means those flavours are now closer to home for communities that have steadily grown across the city's outer corridors.

The occasion had the feel of a true community event. At the Narre Warren launch on 19 March, Mayor Stefan Koomen was there to officially inaugurate the new outlet, standing alongside a crowd of well-wishers and local patrons.

Wyndham Mayor Preet Singh, along with Maribyrnong councillor Pradeep Tiwari and Saravanaa Bhavan managing partner Shekhar Mani at the opening in Truganina on 20 March.

The evening began with a welcome that set the tone for the gathering, followed by song and dance performances, adding to the community atmosphere.

> At the Narre Warren launch on 19 March, Mayor Stefan Koomen was there to officially inaugurate the new outlet, standing alongside a crowd of well-wishers and local patrons

Shekhar Mani, Saravanaa Bhavan Managing Partner, opened with an acknowledgement of the Traditional Custodians of the land, paying his respects to Elders past and present. He thanked the crowd simply for being there, noting how fortunate it was to come together for such a special occasion.

"This is a very ❮TURN TO #27❯

> It is wonderful to see so many community members and leaders here today. Your presence really shows the strength of our community

CR PRADEEP TIWARI



❮CONTINUED FROM #26❯ important event for us," he said, "and we truly appreciate everyone who has taken the time to join us."

The sentiment carried through in Truganina on March 20. The opening there was marked by a modest but warm gathering. Wyndham Mayor Preet Singh formally inaugurated the space, joined by councillor Pradeep Tiwari, community members and families who filled the restaurant even before the ribbon was cut.

Tiwari reflected on what the opening meant beyond the business itself. "It is wonderful to see so many community members and leaders here today. Your presence really shows the strength of our community," he said.

He noted the journey of Saravanaa Bhavan from a family-run operation to a global brand with more than 100 outlets, pointing to the consistency that has allowed it to expand without losing its core.

Saravanaa Bhavan, often described as the world's largest vegetarian restaurant chain, has long built its reputation on familiarity rather than reinvention. Its arrival in new neighbourhoods does not attempt to surprise; instead, it offers something steady and recognisable.

And perhaps that is the point.

In suburbs like Narre Warren and Truganina—places shaped by migration and constant change—there is a quiet comfort in finding something that tastes like it always has. Not new, not different. Just known.

As the first plates went out and conversations settled into the rhythm of a shared meal, the openings felt less like launches and more like extensions of something that was already there—waiting, in memory, to be found again.



Wyndham Mayor Preet Singh, along with Maribyrnong councillor Pradeep Tiwari and Saravanaa Bhavan managing partner Shekhar Mani at the opening in Truganina on 20 March





The organisation, which is the youth wing of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), runs a range of cultural, educational and leadership programmes aimed at supporting young Hindus across Australia

In search of belonging: Voices from a Hindu youth gathering

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

More than 75 young people gathered at the Regency Function Centre on 22 March for the sixth **Hindu Youth Conference**, organised by **Hindu Youth Australia**.

The event, themed Kaleidoscope, brought together participants aged 15 to 35 to discuss identity, culture and community within the experience of being both Hindu and Australian.

The conference focused on the idea that Hindu identity in Australia is shaped by many different cultural, linguistic and personal experiences. Organisers said the theme reflected the diversity within the Hindu community, while also highlighting the shared values and traditions that connect people across backgrounds.

Keynote speaker Devavrath Parasuram opened the conference with a presentation titled Looking Through the Kaleidoscope. He spoke about the changing nature of Australian Hindu identity and the challenge of balancing cultural heritage with life in contemporary Australia.

Parasuram encouraged participants to think about what it means to hold on to traditions while adapting to a modern and multicultural society. His speech set the tone for the day, which centred on open discussion, cultural understanding and the role of young people in shaping the future of the community.

The first session, Rooted and Relevant: Cultural Confidence in a Global Australia, was led by Aashray Marry. It examined the way Hindu identity is often understood through a range of philosophies, traditions and lived experiences rather than a single set of beliefs.

Devavrath Parasuram delivers the keynote speech 'Looking Through the Kaleidoscope' at the 6th Hindu Youth



Conference, guiding discussions on Australian Hindu identity.

Marry described Dharma as something that can take many forms while still coming from a common source. He argued that diversity within Hinduism should not be seen as conflicting, but as part of a broader understanding of faith and culture.

The session also touched on the pressures some young Hindus feel to simplify their identity to fit outside expectations. Marry said this can sometimes lead to incomplete or inaccurate representations of Hindu traditions.

Participants were encouraged to move away from the idea of fitting in and instead feel confident explaining their beliefs and practices in their own words. The session suggested that embracing complexity can help young people feel more secure in their identity.

The second session, Many Voices, One Dharma: The Australian Hindu Mosaic, looked at the different ways Hindu identity is experienced across communities.

Presenters Parthivi Sharma, Madhumitha Shankar and Hiya Ganju each spoke about the experiences of different diaspora communities and how migration, language, history and cultural traditions have shaped their identities.

Sharma focused on the Fiji Indian community and the impact of the Girmit system of indentured labour. She explained how Hinduism became closely tied to community life in Fiji, especially in situations where traditional social and religious structures were limited.

Aashray Marry leads the session 'Rooted & Relevant: Cultural Confidence in a Global Australia,' exploring diversity and harmony within Hindu identity.

She said festivals, rituals and family networks helped preserve cultural identity and maintain a sense of belonging across generations.

Shankar explored the Tamil Hindu experience, pointing to the long history of Tamil culture through literature, philosophy, temple traditions and the arts.

She said Tamil communities have worked to preserve language and cultural practices, even after moving to different countries. Her presentation highlighted the way communities adapt traditions to new settings while still holding on to a strong sense of identity.

Ganju spoke about the Kashmiri Hindu experience, including the challenges faced by Kashmiri Pandits through displacement and migration.

She said the community has maintained its cultural and religious traditions despite historical upheaval. Ganju pointed to the role of family, storytelling and community support in keeping knowledge and identity alive across generations.

Together, the speakers argued that while Hindu communities may have different customs and histories, they are still connected through shared values and beliefs.



The third session, Sacred Expression: Bhakti Through Sound, Word and Movement, turned to the role of devotional practices in cultural and spiritual life.

Madhumitha Shankar presents the Tamil Hindu experience, showcasing how language, rituals, and traditions are preserved across generations while adapting to life in the Australian diaspora.

Skanda Jagadeesh focused on Carnatic music and its connection to Bhakti, showing how music can communicate emotion, philosophy and devotion.

He explained that while a raga follows a particular structure, it can still be interpreted in many different ways. This, he said, reflects the broader Hindu experience, where shared traditions can be expressed differently across communities and individuals.

Jagadeesh also discussed the balance between discipline and creativity within devotional music, particularly through the use of ragas, talas and improvisation.

The session later expanded to include discussion about dance, language and movement as different forms of spiritual expression. Participants took part in a question and answer session with Jagadeesh and Parasuram, exploring how traditional practices can remain relevant for younger generations.

The final session, The Big Debate: Igniting the Flame, invited participants to discuss the future of the Hindu community in Australia.

Young people debated questions around cultural preservation, the role of youth leadership and the challenges of maintaining traditions in a fast-changing society.

Skanda Jagadeesh leads the session 'Sacred Expression: Bhakti Through Sound, Word & Movement,' demonstrating how music and devotional practices convey Hindu identity and heritage.

The discussion highlighted the importance of critical thinking and community engagement. Participants shared different views on how young Hindus can respond to social change while staying connected to their values.

Organisers said the debate reflected the broader purpose of the conference by bringing together different perspectives and encouraging respectful discussion.

Hindu Youth Australia said the event was designed to help young people feel more confident in their identity and more connected to their community.

The organisation, which is the youth wing of Vishva Hindu Parishad, runs a range of cultural, educational and leadership programmes aimed at supporting young Hindus across Australia.

While the conference focused on Hindu identity, its themes of belonging, cultural confidence and intergenerational connection also reflected wider discussions taking place across multicultural Australia.

For many participants, the day offered a chance to hear different stories, ask difficult questions and think about how culture can be carried forward in a changing world.





Speakers & participants at the Balance the Scales: Multicultural Voices for Justice event organised by the Multicultural Women's Alliance Against Family Violence at the Victorian

Questions multicultural women are asking & why they matter

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

On the eve of International Women's Day, the Victorian Parliament Hall was abuzz with the voices of multicultural women. The **Multicultural Women's Alliance** against Family Violence hosted "Balance the Scales: Multicultural Voices for Justice," an evening of raw honesty, hope, and a clear call for change.

Veena Barsiwal, co-chair of the Alliance, welcomed the crowd on Thursday evening. Barsiwal linking the recent festival of Holi to the work ahead. "In a way, it is a beautiful symbol of multiculturalism—people coming together, celebrating differences and joy," she said. "Today we are also here to celebrate women and the strength of women in our communities."

But the celebration had a serious purpose. The event brought together advocates, lawyers, police and politicians to ask: how can the system better support multicultural women facing family violence?

Anasina Gray-Barberio, a Greens Member of Parliament and founding alliance member, reminded everyone this fight is not new. "When we first started, we were simply a group of women passionate about ending gender-based violence," she said.

"We came together as volunteers, determined to make a difference." She stressed that the voices of all women, including those with disabilities and from multicultural backgrounds, must be heard. "Gender-based violence remains an emergency and an epidemic. It has not gone away."

Dr Vinay Rane, a specialist doctor with decades of experience in Melbourne's north-west, spoke of the resilience he has seen. His best

> "Maybe I shouldn't be doing this. What am I bringing onto myself?" She asked the audience: "What more can you do in your own community? Can you talk to someone you think may be struggling?
>
> **CINDY MCLEISH, A LIBERAL MP**

qualification? "I have a mother, a sister and three daughters. My life and my household have been shaped by women."

For multicultural women, he said, challenges are greater—language barriers, visa insecurity, cultural isolation. "But they are not waiting to be saved. They are asking for systems that recognise their courage."

A panel discussion, conducted by Alliance co-chair Nisha Gull-e-Nishat, dug into the barriers. Sonali Deshpande, the first woman of Indian heritage to join Victoria Police, spoke honestly about why 〈TURN TO #31〉

CONTINUED FROM #30 women don't come forward. "One of the biggest barriers is stigma and shame. There is often a perception that going to the police makes everything public," she said.

For migrant women, pressure can even come from overseas relatives telling them to stay silent. "Migration itself can be an isolating experience. When people first arrive, they are focused on survival."

Councillor Gladys Liu from the City of Melbourne highlighted the hidden crisis of homelessness among women, often triggered by family violence. "More than half of people experiencing homelessness are women," she said, noting many multicultural women are part of the "hidden homeless" population, couch-surfing and unseen.

Julie Kun, Chair of Gender Equity Victoria added that "one in five women has a disability," yet services don't reflect this. "Accessibility and inclusion should not be an afterthought. Retrofitting is more expensive and less effective."

Cindy McLeish, a Liberal MP, shared a frustrating reality: despite more money and more police call-outs, the statistics are moving in the wrong direction. She recalled a police officer telling her that while more women are reporting, many later pull back, thinking, "Maybe I shouldn't be doing this. What am I bringing onto myself?" She asked the audience: "What more can you do in your own community? Can you talk to someone you think may be struggling?"



Board members of The Multicultural Women's Alliance against Family Violence // Photo supplied

Professor Supriya Singh from La Trobe University shared news of a global initiative bringing together 57 experts—from sociologists to frontline workers—to develop community-centred solutions to family violence, including exploring how AI might help.

The message echoing through the room was clear: this problem requires all of us. The scales of justice are heavy, but when a community lifts them together, they begin to balance.





Australian Tamil Sangam // Photo supplied

Tamil Sangam workshop inspires youth to question AI & media

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A media training workshop organised for members of the **Australian Tamil Sangam** turned into a lively discussion on artificial intelligence, social media and telling stories in today's world, as young participants peppered *The Indian Sun* journalist Indira Laisram with questions about how things work now.

The workshop was held on Sunday as part of the International Women's Day celebrations organised by the Australian Tamil Sangam, a not-for-profit organisation whose core mission is to support, promote and preserve Tamil culture, language and wellbeing among Tamil Australians and the wider community. The event brought together women, families and community members for a day of appreciation and connection, celebrating the strength and achievements of Tamil women.

The workshop, led by Laisram aimed to help community organisations better understand how to communicate with the media. It covered topics ranging from identifying stories and writing press releases to the role of social media in shaping public narratives.

But it was the interactive question-and-answer segment that truly energised the room.

Several young attendees raised thoughtful questions about the role of AI in writing, the reliability of online information, and whether social media restrictions limit young voices.

Responding to concerns about AI replacing human creativity, Laisram said that while tools like ChatGPT can assist writers, they cannot replace human storytelling.

"AI can help you proofread or check grammar, but it cannot interview people, sit in a room and feel the emotions of a story," she said. "Your strength as a writer is your connection with people, not perfect syntax."

She cautioned students against relying too heavily on AI in school assignments.

"If you depend entirely on AI, you stop thinking for yourself," she said. "Use it as a tool, not as a replacement for your own voice."

One participant asked how young people could share their ideas publicly if they were restricted from using social media platforms.

Laisram encouraged them to explore alternative outlets such as school publications, debates and independent writing platforms.

"There are always other avenues to express your ideas," she said. "School magazines, debates, or even starting your own blog can be powerful ways to share your thoughts."

The conversation also touched on misinformation and the challenge of identifying trustworthy sources in an increasingly polarised media environment.

Laisram advised participants to read widely and consider multiple perspectives.

"My approach is to look at both sides and weigh the arguments," she said. "At the end of the day, you have to use your own judgement."

Throughout the workshop, Laisram stressed the importance of storytelling for community organisations, noting that many important community stories often remain untold.

She encouraged Tamil Sangam members to document and share the achievements and journeys within their community. "Often the event itself is not the story," she said. "The real story is the people behind the event."

Participants were also encouraged to build small communications teams within their organisations to document activities, take photographs and send press releases to media outlets.

"Communication is every organisation's superpower," Laisram said. "The more you tell your stories, the more visible your community becomes."

The training was delivered under The Indian Sun's media training initiative, which was supported by the Victorian Government last year to help multicultural community organisations build media and communication skills. Although the funded program has since concluded, the session for the Australian Tamil Sangam was conducted after the organisation approached The Indian Sun requesting the workshop.

United Global Peace Foundation launched with focus on unity

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun



A gathering at Victoria's Parliament this week brought together politicians, diplomats and community leaders with a shared message—that peace begins with conscience.

Held in Queen's Hall, the "Call for Conscience" event marked the launch of the Australia chapter of the United Global Peace Foundation (UGPF). Around 100 guests attended, representing a mix of cultural groups, organisations and public office on Friday.

The evening began with a welcome from Yogesh Bhatt, founder of the Vivekanand Society of Australia, who also hosted the event. He spoke about the need for compassion and dialogue in an increasingly divided world.

A ceremonial lighting of the lamp, led by UGPF chairman Meghraj Singh Royal along with dignitaries, set the tone for the evening. A Ganesh Vandana performance by the Rhythmica Dance Group followed.

Speaking at the event, Gabrielle Williams MP highlighted the importance of community-led efforts in building harmony.

"Peace is strengthened when communities come together with mutual respect and shared purpose," she said.

Evan Mulholland MP also backed such initiatives, saying strong societies are built on understanding and cooperation. Federal MP Rob Mitchell echoed the sentiment, adding that lasting harmony depends on values-driven leadership.

The event also introduced the leadership team for UGPF Australia, with Chandra Shekhar Singh Chauhan as president, supported by



Ranjan Rana (vice president), Virender Singh Shekhawat (secretary), Jitender Singh (treasurer) and Major Anirudh Singh (retired) as public officer.

Representing the Indian Consulate, Hemant Kumar Pandey spoke about the role of cultural connections and education in strengthening ties between communities.

In his keynote address, UGPF director Dr Vikrant Singh Tomar urged people to bring ethical responsibility into everyday decision-making.

"Peace begins with conscience," he said. "When individuals act with integrity, societies change."

Meghraj Singh Royal was also honoured during the evening for his work in promoting global peace. He said Australia's diversity places it in a strong position to lead by example.

The program included cultural performances, including a peace-themed dance by Rhythmica and a presentation of "Satyam Shivam Sundaram" by Parul Kulshrestha, blending artistic expression with the event's message of unity.

Among those present were several Victorian MPs, councillors and community representatives, reflecting the broad support for the initiative.

The evening concluded with the Melbourne Declaration, a statement committing attendees to promoting peace, dialogue and ethical engagement, followed by a vote of thanks and informal networking.



Celebrating culture and community at Grazeland // Photo supplied

Questions multicultural women are asking & why they matter

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Melbourne's west came alive over the weekend as crowds gathered at Grazeland for the **2026 Victorian Multicultural Festival**—a vibrant celebration of food, culture and community.

Held from March 27 to 29, the three-day festival marked the finale of Cultural Diversity Week, bringing together communities from across Victoria in a shared space of music, movement and flavour.

Presented by the Victorian Multicultural Commission in partnership with Grazeland and the Melbourne Food & Wine Festival, the event transformed the popular food precinct into a lively global showcase.

From the moment gates opened, the atmosphere was electric. Families, friends and visitors moved between food stalls and performance stages, soaking in a program that reflected the breadth of cultures that make up Victoria.

On stage, the line-up was as diverse as the crowd. There was the colour and rhythm of Vietnamese lion dancing, the deep beats of Polynesian drumming, and Irish dance 〈TURN TO #35〉

> "It highlights the dynamic cultures that shape Victoria's identity and creates space for communities to be seen, heard and celebrated. Events like this remind us that when cultures connect, communities thrive?
>
> **VIVIENNE NGUYEN, CHAIRPERSON—VMC**

❮CONTINUED FROM #34❯
performances by emerging local talent. A highlight for many was the performance by Japanese shamisen artist Noriko Tadano, whose music brought a different texture to the weekend's soundscape.

Across the venue, African drumming and dance, Latin and European bands, Turkish belly dancing and Cuban rhythms kept audiences engaged, while roving Brazilian performers added bursts of colour and movement through the crowd.

Food, as always at Grazeland, was central to the experience. Visitors sampled everything from smoky barbecue and rich curries to European classics, Latin American favourites and an array of desserts—a reminder of how food often becomes the easiest way cultures connect.

Victorian Multicultural Commission Chairperson Vivienne Nguyen said the festival plays an important role in bringing communities together.

"It highlights the dynamic cultures that shape Victoria's identity and creates space for communities to be seen, heard and celebrated," she said. "Events like this remind us that when cultures connect, communities thrive."

Victoria's Multicultural Affairs Minister Ingrid Stitt said the festival reflected the strength of the state's diversity.

"Cultural Diversity Week and events like this festival are a celebration of who we are as Victorians," she said. "Our multicultural communities are at the heart of our state, and it's important we continue to support opportunities for people to come together, share their stories and celebrate their heritage."

As music played into the evening and crowds lingered over food and conversation, the festival once again showed why it remains a highlight on Victoria's multicultural calendar—a place where cultures meet, and community is built.



A vibrant cultural performance brings music, movement and tradition to life at the Victorian Multicultural Festival // Photo supplied





Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan shares a moment with community member Mumtaz during a Ramadan Iftar gathering, where Muslim community leaders and guests came together to mark the holy month and discuss efforts to combat Islamophobia across Victoria. Photo/X

Victoria launches resources to combat Islamophobia

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The Victorian Government has launched a set of public resources aimed at helping people recognise and respond to Islamophobia, marking the International Day to Combat Islamophobia and responding to recent anti-Muslim incidents.

Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt announced the 'Combatting Islamophobia Resources', developed with Muslim community representatives. The guides explain different forms of Islamophobia and provide advice on how to respond to incidents of hate or discrimination.

The materials include information on how to intervene safely, support those affected and report incidents when they occur. Translated versions will also be made available so they can reach communities across the state.

Ms Stitt said the government remained committed to supporting Muslim Victorians and addressing racism.

"We will always back Victoria's Muslim communities and stand with them," she said.

"There is no place for hate, division or discrimination of any kind in our state."

"It is the responsibility of all Victorians to play a role in stamping out these distressing and hateful acts."

The ❮TURN TO #37❯

Work is also underway with Muslim organisations and leaders to address Islamophobia in schools. The government said it would collaborate with groups including the Islamic Museum of Australia, the Islamic Council of Victoria and the Board of Imams to support greater understanding among students

❮CONTINUED FROM #36❯
government said the resources were produced with input from Muslim communities to ensure they reflect lived experience and provide practical guidance.

The release comes after a series of anti-Muslim incidents in Victoria, which authorities say highlight the need for stronger public awareness and community action to prevent further harm.

Work is also underway with Muslim organisations and leaders to address Islamophobia in schools. The government said it would collaborate with groups including the Islamic Museum of Australia, the Islamic Council of Victoria and the Board of Imams to support greater understanding among students.

Board of Imams Victoria Executive Director Sheikh Moustapha Sarakibi welcomed the initiative and said it sends a clear message about the state's position on anti-Muslim discrimination.

"The Board of Imams Victoria welcomes this important step by the Victorian Labor Government, developed in partnership with the Muslim community, to tackle Islamophobia in our state," he said.

"This guide sends a clear message that anti-Muslim hate has no place in Victoria."



The Victorian Government says the resources form part of broader work aimed at reducing racism and strengthening multicultural communities. Officials say Victoria has introduced anti-vilification laws and developed an Anti-Racism Strategy as part of this approach.

The guides are available through the Victorian Government website and include translated versions intended to make the information accessible to a wider audience.



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Mayor Stretch Kontelj with Geelong-India Collaborative Futures Forum guests Manpreet Sekhon, Sunil Bhalla and Sunny Singh // Photos supplied

Geelong hosts forum to deepen India partnership

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Geelong will host a three-day gathering of business, industry and community leaders this month aimed at strengthening ties between the regional Victorian city and India.

The Geelong-India Collaborative Futures Forum will bring together representatives from government, education and industry to discuss trade, investment and cultural connections. The event is organised by the City of Greater Geelong in partnership with the Australia India Business Council and follows earlier discussions held at the first Geelong India Business Roundtable in June last year.

City officials say the forum will highlight Geelong's position as a destination for business, education and tourism while presenting opportunities in sectors including advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, education and film production.

Mayor Stretch Kontelj OAM said the event would help advance links with one of the world's fastest growing economies.

"We're a globally connected city and council will continue to advocate for Geelong as a fantastic place to live, learn and do business," Mayor Kontelj said.

"I made a commitment at the roundtable last year, and by signing the MOU, to build on our relationship with India and explore new ways of working together, so I'm proud to be delivering on that knowing the lasting benefits it will have for our community."

The gathering forms part of Geelong's International Engagement Strategy and follows a memorandum of understanding signed last August between the City of Greater Geelong and the Australia India Business Council to promote cultural and commercial exchange.

Several keynote speakers are scheduled to appear ❮TURN TO #39❯



Mayor Cr. Dr. Stretch Kontelj OAM and AIBC National Chair Deepak Raj Gupta OAM during the MOU signing

> We're pleased to be working with the City of Greater Geelong to collaborate and bring together businesses and industries to deliver great outcomes for all

DEEPAK-RAJ GUPTA OAM

《CONTINUED FROM #38》 during the forum, including AI entrepreneur Aamir Qutub, Darryl Mohr, who co-authored the Australia India Institute report "Advancing High-Performance Sports: Victoria-India Opportunities", executive chef Manpreet Sekhon, Sunny Singh, who was named Student of the Year, and Child Education and Rights Foundation founder Sunil Bhalla. Aunty Jenny Spice founder Ramneek Wayne will also speak.

The program includes a networking evening at Geelong Gallery sponsored by The Gordon, the launch of the City of Greater Geelong's 2026 Investment Prospectus, a family tourism presentation with local tours, and a food and agribusiness breakfast hosted by the Geelong Manufacturing Council.

Additional sessions will include an international lunch organised by the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, discussions on manufacturing and innovation, support programs for businesses and start-ups, and education partnerships. A strategic roundtable is expected to identify next steps in strengthening links between Geelong and India.

AIBC national chair Deepak-Raj Gupta OAM said the collaboration reflects growing interest in regional opportunities.

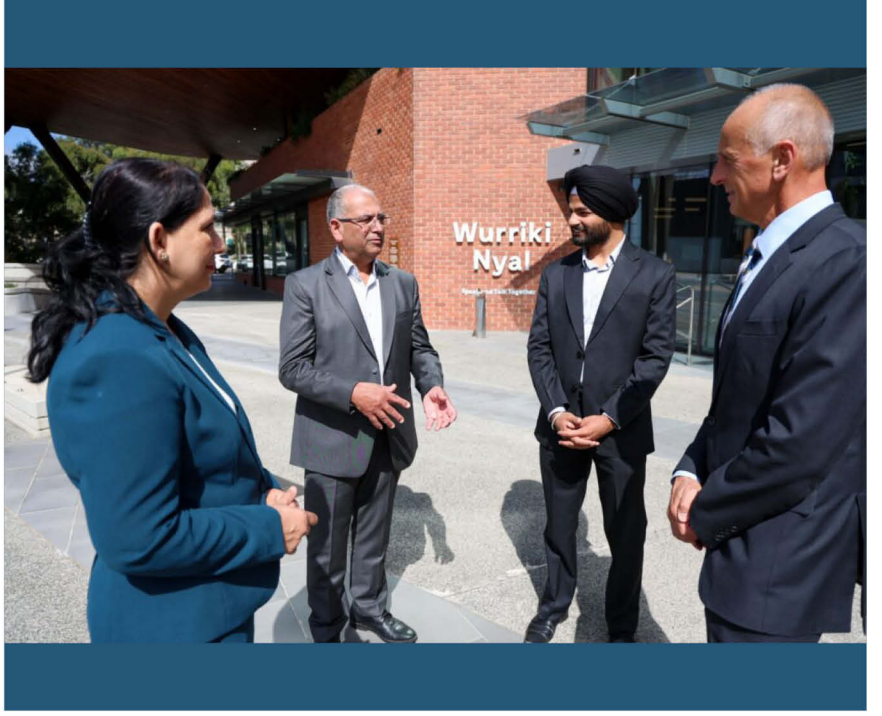
"We're pleased to be working with the City of Greater Geelong to collaborate and bring together businesses and industries to deliver great outcomes for all," Mr Gupta said.

"I have been leading delegations to India and telling everyone about Geelong; and arranged for the Indian Consul General in Chennai to join the Roundtable as one of the VIP guests.

"Families, businesses and investors are increasingly looking beyond capital cities to explore opportunities, and Geelong has a lot to offer."

Population trends are part of the backdrop for the forum. Census data from 2021 shows 17.7 per cent of residents in the City of Greater Geelong were born overseas, including more than 5,000 people born in India, a figure that has more than doubled since 2016.

India is projected to become the world's third largest economy by the end of the decade, adding further interest in closer ties between regional Australian cities and Indian businesses and institutions.





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Australia-India partnership takes step closer green steel through world-first use of ag waste in steelmaking // Photo supplied

Australia-India green steel trial uses agricultural waste to cut emissions

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A joint Australia India research effort has shown that agricultural waste can partly replace coal in steel production, offering a potential pathway to reduce emissions in one of the world's most carbon-intensive industries.

Researchers from Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, and the Indian Institute of Science conducted a full-scale trial in India using rice husk pellets to generate biomass-derived synthesis gas for iron ore reduction. The test was carried out at a commercial steelworks operated by Jindal Steel in Odisha in partnership with RESCONS Solutions Pvt., a steel technology company incubated at the Foundation for Science, Innovation and Development at IISc.

Steel production accounts for roughly one-tenth of global carbon emissions. India's steel sector, the fastest growing in the world, currently produces an average of 2.55 tonnes of carbon dioxide for every tonne of steel, above the global average of 1.8 tonnes.

"This trial is a world-first demonstration of how agricultural waste can be harnessed to decarbonise steelmaking at scale. By blending rice husk pellets into commercial gasifiers, we've shown that biomass 〈TURN TO #41〉



CONTINUED FROM #40

can replace coal without compromising performance.

This is a major step forward for sustainable steel production in India and globally," said Warren Flentje, Senior Experimental Scientist at CSIRO.

During the trial, researchers blended five and ten per cent rice husk pellets into Jindal Steel's gasifiers. The process produced a steady flow of biomass-derived syngas used to reduce iron ore, while maintaining normal operating performance.

If the method were adopted across India's steel sector, researchers estimate emissions could fall by as much as 50 per cent, amounting to about 357 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.

India's steel industry is expanding rapidly. Production capacity is projected to reach 300 million tonnes by 2030 and 500 million tonnes by 2047. The sector currently accounts for around 12 per cent of the country's total emissions, largely because many facilities rely on coal-based processes and direct reduced iron kilns.

Keith Vining, Research Group Leader for Green Metals Production at CSIRO, said the collaboration addressed both industrial emissions



and regional resource use.

"India's steel sector is both a major employer and a source of emissions. Our partnership with the Indian Institute of Science and JSPL has demonstrated that biomass can be a viable alternative to coal, especially in regional areas where surplus agri-waste and coal DRI facilities co-exist. The next phase will focus on increasing biomass replacement rates and assessing impacts on the direct reduction process."

India generates large volumes of agricultural residues each year. Surplus crop residue biomass has been estimated at more than 228 million tonnes. Much of this material is currently burned in fields, contributing to poor air quality in parts of the country.

Researchers say redirecting some of that waste into steel production could reduce emissions while limiting the need for open burning. Biomass use in steelmaking could lower net emissions by roughly 1.19 tonnes of carbon dioxide for every tonne of crude steel produced.

The project forms part of the India Australia Green Steel Research Partnership supported by the Australian Government. As part of the effort to support wider adoption, the CSIRO and RESCONS team has created an online map showing India's steel plants alongside regional biomass supplies. The tool is designed to help companies assess where biomass-based production could be viable.

Professor Govind S. Gupta, Managing Director of RESCONS Solutions, said the collaboration reflects an effort to combine research with industrial practice.

"At RESCONS Solutions, we believe in environmentally sustainable solutions that benefit present and future generations. Collaborating with CSIRO and IISc, we are proud to help pioneer the use of biomass in steelmaking, supporting India's transition to greener industrial practices."

India's government has outlined plans to achieve net zero emissions by 2070. Policy discussions include greater use of electric arc furnaces, expanded recycling of scrap steel, carbon capture and storage, green hydrogen and biomass-based fuels.

Damodar Mittal, Executive Director at Jindal Steel, said the trial formed part of the company's wider shift toward lower emission production.

"This collaboration marks a pivotal moment in our journey towards decarbonisation using green hydrogen and green energy, accelerating our transition to lower-emission steel. By integrating green energy and biomass into our production processes, we are not only reducing our carbon footprint but also setting a new benchmark for the Indian steel industry."

Researchers say further trials will now examine how the process performs in smaller regional facilities and with additional biomass sources.

A spokesperson from the Indian Institute of Science said innovation in production methods could reshape how steel is made in the decades ahead.

"Conventional steel production is highly carbon intensive, but process innovations like biomass gasification and hydrogen reduction can drastically lower emissions. Our partnership with CSIRO is helping to bring carbon neutrality to steel production by 2050."





Geelong targets four sectors to deepen India ties after forum

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Geelong will focus on four priority sectors to strengthen its partnership with India following a three-day forum that brought together government, business and community leaders.

The City of Greater Geelong said the approach emerged from a roundtable at the end of the **Geelong-India Collaborative Futures Forum**, where participants agreed the next phase should centre on delivery and measurable outcomes.

More than 100 guests attended the forum from 16 to 18 March, with 40 speakers taking part, including India's Consul General in Melbourne, Shri Anish Rajan. Representatives joined from across Australia and from India.

The city has identified advanced manufacturing and innovation, film and creativity, tourism and sport, and food and agribusiness as the key areas for collaboration. Officials said these sectors would be supported by education and skills development, with dedicated networks and monthly sessions planned to maintain momentum.

The agenda will include examining visa pathways, analysing trade trends and initiating pilot programs to strengthen links between Geelong and Indian partners.

Mayor Stretch Kontelj said the city was well placed to pursue targeted growth. "We can be masters of our own destiny, particularly as a rapidly growing city with strong projected population growth. We are well positioned as a self-sustaining economic centre, with land available for considered residential and industrial development, and we are incredibly fortunate in that regard."



He said the partnership required focus. "A collaboration with India will bring opportunities we are only just beginning to understand, but we must be focused—we can't do everything, so we need to be strategic about where we invest our energy."

Shri Anish Rajan said the discussions had set a direction for practical cooperation. "What flows from these discussions is extremely important, as we look at practical pathways to drive ❮TURN TO #43❯

> We are well positioned as a self-sustaining economic centre, with land available for considered residential and industrial development

MAYOR STRETCH KONTELJ



<CONTINUED FROM #42> growth, economic opportunity and shared prosperity for both our communities."

He said Geelong's business environment showed promise. "There is already a strong and growing pipeline of entrepreneurs emerging from Geelong, which is an encouraging sign for future engagement. This entrepreneurial spirit will play a key role in strengthening business links between India and Geelong in the years ahead."

Australian Consul-General in Chennai Silai Zaki encouraged a broader geographic focus within India. "Geelong should position itself as a capability partner—showcasing its strengths in advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, skills and lifestyle—while building the long-term relationships that underpin success in India."

She said there remained scope to expand engagement. "India's trade with the world has grown significantly, and its engagement with Australia has accelerated even faster. While some cities are reaching saturation point, there is still significant scope to engage with emerging regions and establish partnerships at an early stage."

Australia India Business Council chair Deepak-Raj Gupta said the partnership had clear commercial potential. "The synergies between Geelong and India present a clear pathway to accelerate commercial growth. The forum clearly demonstrated the need for a strong partnership to prioritize this potential. We are focused on strengthening port-to-port connectivity, particularly with Chennai, to streamline supply chains and enhance trade throughput."

He said improved logistics would support investment flows. "This logistical foundation will support a dual investment strategy: directing capital into Geelong's advanced manufacturing and services sectors, while fostering Indian industry growth through cross-border capability development. This is a mutual value proposition designed to build enduring capacity at both ends of the partnership."

The forum builds on earlier engagement, including a business roundtable held in June and a memorandum of understanding signed in August between the City of Greater Geelong and the Australia India Business Council.

Organisers said the focus would now turn to sustaining engagement through ongoing industry collaboration and structured partnerships.







‘We love teaching, but love doesn’t stop burn-out’

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

On the morning of 24 March, thousands of Victorian teachers did something they rarely do—they walked away from their classrooms.

They gathered instead on city streets, carrying placards and a message that was simple but powerful: value our work.

For many, it was not an easy decision.

"I didn't go into the city, but I didn't work that day. I was on strike," says **Manisha Beniwal**, who has been teaching at Berwick Secondary for three years.

Behind that decision lies a deeper story—not just about pay, but about what teaching has quietly become.

Ask any teacher what their day looks like, and the answer is rarely simple.

For **Sunita Kalia**, who has been teaching in Australia since 2006, the change has been gradual but unmistakable. "When I started, it was one teacher, one class. Now the expectations are very different."

Her role today goes far beyond teaching. As a wellbeing leading teacher at Cranbourne Carlisle Primary School, she supports students with complex needs, works with teachers, speaks to parents and manages detailed documentation.

"You support a student, then you document it. You speak to parents, you document that. You follow up again the next day. It's constant."

On some days, even the best-laid plans do not hold.

"I thought I'd sit and finish my admin work, but I spent half the day supporting a student who was having a difficult time," she says. "That's the reality, no two days are the same."

In today's classrooms, one lesson rarely fits all. "You might have a Year 8 class where one student is working at a Year 3 level, and another is ready for Year 10 work," says **Garima Mantry**. "You have to plan for both. You have to make sure each student feels they've learned something."

That means constant adjustment—different materials, different approaches, different expectations—all within the same class.

"And then when you're teaching, you still try to connect with every student," she says. "If I have 25 students, I try to at least check in with 10 in one lesson."

Outside the classroom, the work continues—yard duty, meetings and follow-ups.

And then there are the small but important things.

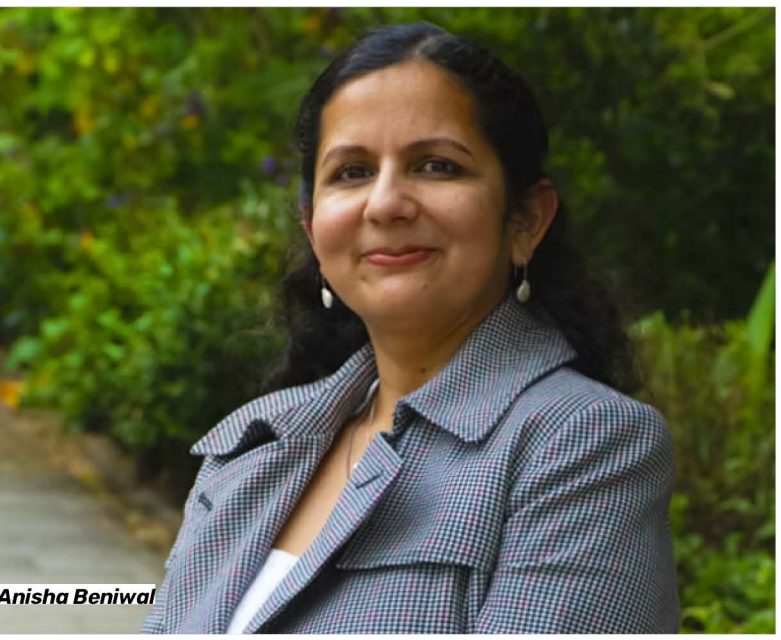
"We teach about 80 to 85 students," she says. "And we have to know all their names. You can't just say 'hey'—you need that personal connection."

Despite everything, all three teachers come back to the same thing: why they chose this profession in the first place.

"I love being around young minds," Mantry says. "Shaping young minds is really about shaping the future."

For Beniwal, it is about those small moments that make the effort worthwhile. "Even if there are just five students in a class who are really engaged, that feeling that you've made a difference, that's enough."

Kalia says the same. "When you see a child finally understand something after struggling for days, that feeling is unmatched.That's what makes the job meaningful." **<TURN TO #47>**


Anisha Beniwal

"There's this perception that once you come home, the job ends," Beniwal says. "But it doesn't. Some days I have dinner and then work till 10 or 11 at night"

MANISHA BENIWAL

> If conditions don't improve, teachers will burn out and leave. And then we risk losing good teachers

GARIMA MANTRY




Garima Mantry


Sunita Kaja

> It's not just about salary. It's about feeling valued. We can't reduce the work. But at least it needs to be acknowledged
>
> **SUNITA KALIA**

CONTINUED FROM #45

Here is what the numbers look like. A graduate teacher in Victoria earns about $79,589 a year. An experienced teacher at the top of the scale , someone who has spent decades in the job, earns around $118,063.

In New South Wales, that same experienced teacher will soon earn more than $15,000 extra. Victoria now offers the lowest teacher salaries in the country.

And then there is the private system. At Melbourne's Trinity Grammar, an experienced teacher can earn about $146,000 a year. Add leadership roles, and that can go up to $177,000. That is not a small difference. It is the distance between two entirely different economic lives.

But the teachers who spoke after the strike did not just talk about pay. They talked about their actual days—and their nights.

"It's not just about salary," Kalia says. "It's about feeling valued."

There is also concern about what happens if things do not change.

"If conditions don't improve, teachers will burn out and leave," Mantry says. "And then we risk losing good teachers."

The strain is already showing.

Teachers speak of growing workloads, rising expectations and a system that still relies too heavily on goodwill.

"We can't reduce the work," Kalia says. "But at least it needs to be acknowledged."

There is also a human cost—for teachers, for students and for families. "I do feel for parents," Kalia says. "When strikes happen, they have to take time off, and students miss a day of learning."

But she says the conversation can no longer be avoided. "We need to show what we do and what support we need."

For now, talks between the government and the union continue. Many teachers still believe an agreement will come.

"It's just a matter of time," Kalia says.

But there is also a sense that this moment matters.

For all the frustration, none of these teachers speak lightly about walking away. They still show up. They still care. They still believe in the work.

Because beyond the paperwork, the meetings and the long nights, there is still the classroom. Still the students. Still that moment when something clicks.

And for now, that is what keeps them going.



Constable Chvenne Koki-Collier (centre) with her graduating cohort

Restoring safety where you live

OUR REPORTER *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun

The new Queensland Government is **Making Queensland Safer** with more police and stronger laws combined with early intervention and rehabilitation programs for at-risk youth.

Already delivering a 7.2 per cent reduction in victim numbers* and with serious repeat offenders down 17 per cent**, the Government is breaking the cycle of crime. But there's more to be done.

Under Adult Crime, Adult Time more than 4,000 youth offenders have been charged with more than 19,000 offences. Youth bail monitoring laws are also stronger, improving safety where you live

More than 1,600 new police are restoring safety where you live.

Bolstered police capability includes an expanded POLAIR (police aerial operations) and the largest rapid response unit in Queensland's history. The State Flying Squad is providing surge capacity straight into crime hotspots—moving fast to target and remove criminals from the street.

Crime hotspots are being targeted through locally led and centrally coordinated police operations. Operation Steeler recently resulted in 1,300 people charged with 4,072 offences. Operation Forge is underway across the state delivering a highly visible six-month crackdown on break-ins, robberies and stolen cars.

Jack's Law is keeping our streets safer, with police scanning for, detecting and removing weapons to combat knife crime.

The Government is also making children safer with strengthened new powers to cancel blue and exemption cards and through Daniel's Law—which delivers access to vital information to help families and giving police the power to act.

More information is available at DanielsLaw.qld.gov.au

Significant investment in early intervention and rehabilitation programs is breaking the cycle of crime by helping at-risk youth re-engage with education and their communities.

Across South East Queensland, the new Queensland Government is backing frontline policing—upgrading key police facilities and delivering stronger surveillance and air support.

Major station projects are underway in Ripley, Boondall, Mt Gravatt and Ferny Grove, complementing the expansion of POLAIR flight hours, so police can reach incidents faster.

Expanded CCTV networks in Brisbane and Moreton Bay are also boosting real-time monitoring.

South East Queensland communities can tap into Secure Communities Partnerships grants to expand CCTV coverage and lift security for small business and local government.

For more information visit business.qld.gov.au/securegrant

1 FRONTLINE POLICING REBUILT WITH 1,600 ADDITIONAL POLICE

Frontline policing is being rebuilt with 1,600 additional officers as part of the plan to make Queensland safer.

Following the March graduation of 61 police officers from the Queensland Police Academy in Oxley, a total of 1,625 new police recruits have been delivered

> Jack's Law is keeping our streets safer, with police scanning for, detecting and removing weapons to combat knife crime

*compared to 2024 (Jan to Dec) per capita **Compared to 2024 serious repeat youth offenders

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Authorised by the Queensland Government

Advertisement

Back to school relief for families



With kids back at school for 2026, the new Queensland Government is delivering back to school relief for families.

There are **$200 Play On! Sports Vouchers** to help kids play their favourite sport, with heaps of sports to play all across Queensland.

Plus, there's a **$100 Back to School Boost** for every primary school student to help cover the cost of school essentials.

Back to School

DELIVERING FOR QUEENSLAND | Queensland Government

Authorised by the Queensland Government, Brisbane.

in less than 18 months.

These officers are ready to support their communities with integrity, respect and courage in communities across the State, including Brisbane, Cairns, Mount Isa, Townsville, Mackay, the Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay and the Gold Coast.

A career with the QPS offers diverse roles, unique challenges and the chance to make a real difference every day.

From emergency response and crime prevention to community engagement and public safety, no two days are ever the same.

Gold Coast volunteer Surf Lifesaver, Constable Sophie Christie, deployed to the South Brisbane District, said she felt it was an obvious career move to go from the boat to the beat.

"I wanted to continue to help people and I wanted my work to have a meaningful impact to Queensland," Constable Christie said.

"Policing ticked all of those boxes for me; I just can't wait to get out there and make a difference in people's lives."

Former school chaplain Noah Langley, now stationed at Tully Police Station, is part of the growing local capability in the Far North.

"It's my people, ❮TURN TO #50❯

Authorised by the Queensland Government

DELIVERING FOR QUEENSLAND | Queensland Government



POLAIR in action. Image credit Kana Photography

Recommended by the Queensland Government's Expert Legal Panel, the new laws deliver strengthened youth crime laws and put the rights of victims first

CONTINUED FROM #49 it's my home. I couldn't imagine serving any other place than Queensland," he said.

Constable Chyenne Koki-Collier joined the service to help others.

"The people who have helped me along the way in my life really motivated me to try and help others," she said..

For more information visit policerecruit.qld.gov.au

❷ OPERATION FORGE RESTORING SAFETY WHERE YOU LIVE

A six-month locally led and centrally coordinated operation targeting break-ins, robberies and stolen cars is underway across the state.

Operation Forge combines specialist personnel from POLAIR (Police Aerial Operations), the State Flying Squad, Youth Co-Responder and Public Safety Response Safety Team with local police.

In just the first month more than 1,300 people—including 502 juveniles – have been charged with 2,972 offences.

QPS Deputy Commissioner Regional Operations, John Tims, said communities would see more highly visible proactive patrols to reduce crime.

"Bolstered by coordinated investigations and shared intelligence, the operation will target prolific, high harm repeat offenders," he said.

"Responses will be tailored for local issues and have the flexibility to strategically shift gears to target high-crime and high-harm locations."

Officer in Charge of POLAIR Senior Sergeant Tony Lawliss said the expansion of POLAIR's aerial crime-fighting capability to Cairns and the Sunshine Coast had bolstered their ability to support on-ground crews in responding to emergencies.

"Our highly trained crews can respond to incidents faster now that they've been strategically positioned out of more regional bases across Queensland," he said.

❸ FLYING SQUAD DELIVERS SAFER STREETS FOR QUEENSLANDERS

Built to quickly target and remove dangerous criminals from the streets, the State Flying Squad has clocked up 125 deployments to make Queensland safer.

The largest police rapid response unit in Queensland's history is restoring safety where you live, so far arresting 2,265 offenders, including 1,279 youths, on 6,931 charges.

The unit has been deployed to fight crime in locations including the Far North, Townsville and Darling Downs Districts.

Senior Constable Samuel Wendt, an officer with the State Flying Squad says their work strengthens existing police activities by providing surge capacity into local crime hotspots.

"We boost their ability to conduct operations by boosting their numbers on the frontlines, which increases community safety," he said.

"Recently, we have been regularly deployed to assist with operations that aim to reduce property crime in Northern and Far Northern Queensland, which resulted in reduced numbers of victims of crime."

❹ JACK'S LAW MAKES IMPACT ACROSS THE STATE

Jack's Law is helping make Queensland safer by enabling police to



Police officers use hand-held metal detectors to scan for knives and other weapons

When a young person leaves detention, the Staying on Track program steps in immediately with six months of intensive support to reduce the risk of reoffending


State flying squad

use handheld metal detectors to find knives and other weapons without a warrant.

In the first six months that Jack's Law was made permanent by the new Queensland Government, police have scanned 82,648 people across the state, seized 603 weapons, made 1,280 arrests and laid 2,424 charges.

Brett and Belinda Beasley lost their 17-year-old son, Jack, in December 2019 at Surfers Paradise when he was stabbed during a night out with friends.

Today, they are proud to see Jack's legacy drive real change, with every wanding operation helping police remove weapons from the streets.

"We don't want any other family to go through what we've been through," Mr Beasley said.

⑤ ADULT CRIME, ADULT TIME EXPANDS TO 45 OFFENCES

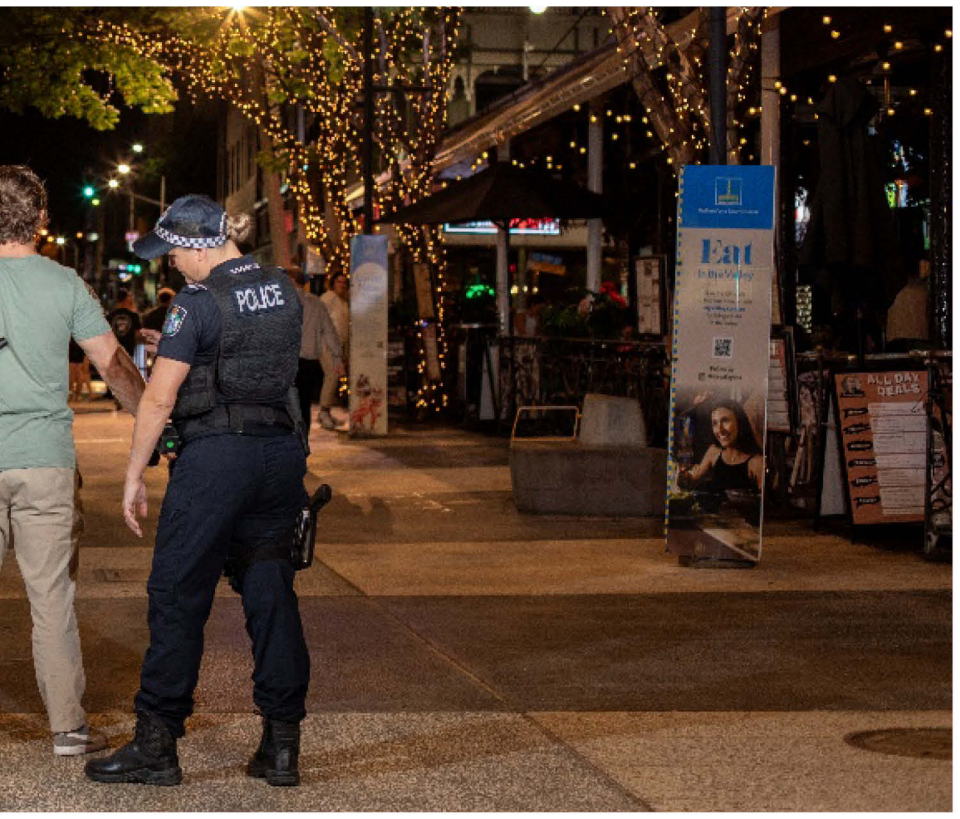
Protecting communities, reducing reoffending and holding young offenders to account underpins 12 additional Adult Crime, Adult Time offences introduced into State Parliament in March.

Recommended by the Queensland Government's Expert Legal Panel, the new laws deliver strengthened youth crime laws and put the rights of victims first.

So far, more than 4,000 youth offenders have been charged with more than 19,000 Adult Crime, Adult Time offences, contributing to a 7.2 per cent year on year drop in crime victims.

With the 12 new offences introduced in March, there are now 45 youth crime offences to make Queenslander safer.

The decisive reforms, along with early intervention and rehabilitation programs, send a clear message that youth offenders will face serious consequences for their actions.



⑥ DANIEL'S LAW: TURNING A LEGACY INTO SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR QUEENSLAND'S CHILDREN

Daniel's Law is one of the most significant reforms to child safety legislation in Queensland's history and is a major milestone in restoring safety where you live.

With more than 205,000 visits to the Daniel's Law website since 31 December 2025, the State's first public sex offender register provides parents the power to know and the power to act to keep their families safe.

The online register provides tiered information to monitor the location of convicted child sex offenders, helping communities stay alert and informed.

The register honours the legacy of Sunshine Coast schoolboy Daniel Morcombe, whose abduction and murder in 2003 inspired two decades of advocacy for stronger child protection laws.

"It has been more than 20 years since Daniel was taken from us, and every single day since, we've fought to make sure no other family goes through what we did," Bruce and Denise Morcombe shared.

"Daniel's Law is about protecting kids, empowering parents, and shining a light on those who lurk in the dark."

QPS Detective Acting Chief Superintendent Denzil Clark said Daniel's Law will help families better understand local risks and take informed precautions.

"Daniel's Law provides parents, guardians and the broader community with access to information that helps safeguard children," he said.

Visit DanielsLaw.qld.gov.au

⑦ BREAKING THE CYCLE: EARLY INTERVENTION TO PREVENT REOFFENDING AND MAKE QUEENSLAND SAFER

The new Queensland Government is delivering targeted early intervention programs that support at-risk young people, increase accountability and reduce reoffending.

The Regional Reset program intervenes when young people start to disengage or show signs of antisocial behaviour. It combines mentoring, outdoor challenges and cultural learning to build skills and confidence to make safer choices and avoid trouble.

When a young person leaves detention, the Staying on Track program steps in immediately with six months of intensive support to reduce the risk of reoffending. The program connects youths with mentoring, family support and practical life skills training to build routines and stay on a positive path.

The government is also strengthening local crime prevention by backing community-led projects through Kickstarter Grants and expanding school-based support—opening four new Crime Prevention Schools and two Youth Justice Schools.

To ensure the longevity of early intervention and youth justice programs, the Queensland Government is investing $560 million in early intervention and youth justice programs, including $225 million over five years to deliver Staying on Track.

In South East Queensland, the Isurava Program, part of the Regional Reset initiative, is helping young people turn their lives around.

Angie Debnam, CEO of the Kokoda Youth Foundation, says taking young people out of their usual environment is one of the most beneficial aspects of the program.

"When young people realise they can make a change and take ownership of their future, that's incredibly powerful."

For youth leaving detention, the Staying on Track program, delivered by Life Without Barriers, provides 12 months of support to reduce reoffending.

"The biggest difference is the long-term support," says Regional Director Sarah Mahony.

"We've seen young people rebuild relationships with their parents, return home, and even walk away from crime."



Photos supplied

Your Moment to Build Bigger, Better and Smarter

***Simonds Homes** extends $40K off, $50K upgrades for The Indian Sun readers*

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

In a market where timing, value and confidence matter more than ever, Simonds Homes is offering Victorian buyers a rare opportunity to step into something truly exceptional, without compromise.

For a limited time, Simonds' latest Inspirations offer has been extended until the end of April exclusively for *The Indian Sun* readers. Across four premium double-storey homes from Simonds' Inspirations range, families can secure up to $40,000 off, $50,000 in upgrades, and free cooling included* when building on titled land, unlocking significant value in homes designed for modern family living. It's an opportunity that gives you more time to move forward with confidence and secure a home built for togetherness, shared living, and the way families grow over time.

A SMARTER WAY TO BUILD IN TODAY'S MARKET

For many families across Victoria, building a home isn't just about the next step, it's about getting it right for the long term.

It's about creating a space that supports everyday life, celebrates time together, and still allows room to grow. A home that works just as well for busy weekdays, as it does for weekends filled with family, food, and connection.

"More than ever, people are thinking carefully about how they want to live," says Simonds Homes Chief of Sales & Marketing, Shaun Patterson. "They're looking for homes that feel considered, where the layout makes sense, the spaces are generous, and there's flexibility to adapt over time."

For many families, that often includes planning for extended family, particularly elderly parents living at home or visiting for longer stays. It's a way of living that values both closeness and care, and it's something that needs to be thoughtfully reflected in the design of the home.

"We're seeing strong demand for homes that can comfortably accommodate multiple generations," Patterson adds. **<TURN TO #53>**

> The Edmonton really speaks to families who want to live together comfortably

SHAUN PATTERSON CHIEF OF SALES &MARKETING— SIMONDS HOMES





CONTINUED FROM #52 "Features like ground floor bedrooms or the option to include a master suite downstairs make a real difference. It allows older parents to have their own space, without needing to navigate stairs, while still feeling connected to the rest of the home."

"It's this kind of flexibility that is becoming just as important as location or size when it comes to building."

DESIGNED FOR MULTI-GENERATIONAL LIVING

At the heart of Simonds' offer are four standout designs from the Inspirations range: Balmoral 38, Balmoral 46, Edmonton 47, and Atherton 49, each created to support the way modern families live, together yet with space to breathe.

Across all four homes, multiple living areas create balance, with spaces for shared meals, gatherings, and hosting extended family, alongside areas for privacy.

The Balmoral combines elegant design with everyday functionality. With multiple living zones and walk-in robes to every bedroom, it offers comfort and practicality, while the master suite adds a sense of everyday luxury.

The design also offers flexibility over time, including the option to incorporate a ground floor master suite, ideal for visiting parents, long-term stays, or a dedicated prayer room.

"It's a home that adapts to the way you live," Patterson explains.

For those seeking that flexibility already built in, the Edmonton 47 delivers. Designed for multi-generational living, it includes a ground floor master suite as standard, offering a private, accessible space for elderly parents or extended family.

An expansive open-plan living and alfresco area forms the heart of the home, ideal for bringing everyone together, while upstairs retreat spaces provide separation when needed.

"The Edmonton really speaks to families who want to live together comfortably," says Patterson.

The Atherton 49 brings together scale and sophistication, also featuring a ground floor master suite as standard. With multiple living areas and a generous alfresco, it offers flexibility for a range of lifestyles.

"The Atherton is about creating a home that works for every stage of life," Patterson adds.

MORE THAN A PROMOTION—A WELL-TIMED OPPORTUNITY

For many families, once land is secured, the next step isn't something to delay. It's about moving forward with clarity, making confident decisions, and keeping momentum as plans start to take shape.

"Once your land is titled, everything starts to feel real," says Patterson. "That's when families are ready to move ahead with locking in their home, their design, and the inclusions that matter most to them."

Simonds' Inspirations offer simplifies the process, helping families to move forward without unnecessary delays, securing both their home and the added value while it's available.

For those who haven't secured land just yet, there's still a clear pathway forward. Simonds can assist with tailored house and land packages, helping you find the right block and home combination to suit your needs, making the journey feel considered and straightforward from the very beginning.

With an exclusive extension until the end of April for Indian Sun readers, this is a limited window designed for those ready to take the next step.

"It's about recognising the moment," Patterson adds. "For families who are prepared and ready to go, this is a chance to secure their dream home with even more value included."

BUILT FOR LIFESTYLE, BACKED BY EXPERIENCE

For over 75 years, Simonds has been shaping homes for Australians, evolving alongside the way families live. Today, that legacy continues through designs that prioritise space, light, and flexibility, qualities that are especially important for growing and multi-generational households.

The Inspirations range reflects this deeply. Open-plan living areas encourage connection, while separate retreats provide privacy. Thoughtful inclusions (like walk-in robes to every bedroom, expansive kitchens with walk-in pantries, and multiple living zones) ensure the home works as beautifully as it looks.

And for families with specific cultural or lifestyle requirements, that flexibility extends to how spaces can be used and adapted.

"We work closely with our customers to ensure their home reflects how they truly live," says Patterson. "That might mean adjusting a layout to create a prayer room, a second living zone for extended family, or simply ensuring there's enough space for everyone to feel comfortable."

To learn more about Simonds' Inspirations offer or view the floorplans, visit ***simonds.com.au****. Ready to chat? Find a display near you to speak with your local Simonds New Home Specialist or call 1300 SIMOND.*

T&C's apply, see* ***simonds.com.au* *for more information. CDB-U 49491*



Shipping from India to Australia? Austral-Asia Freight makes it simpler for importers

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

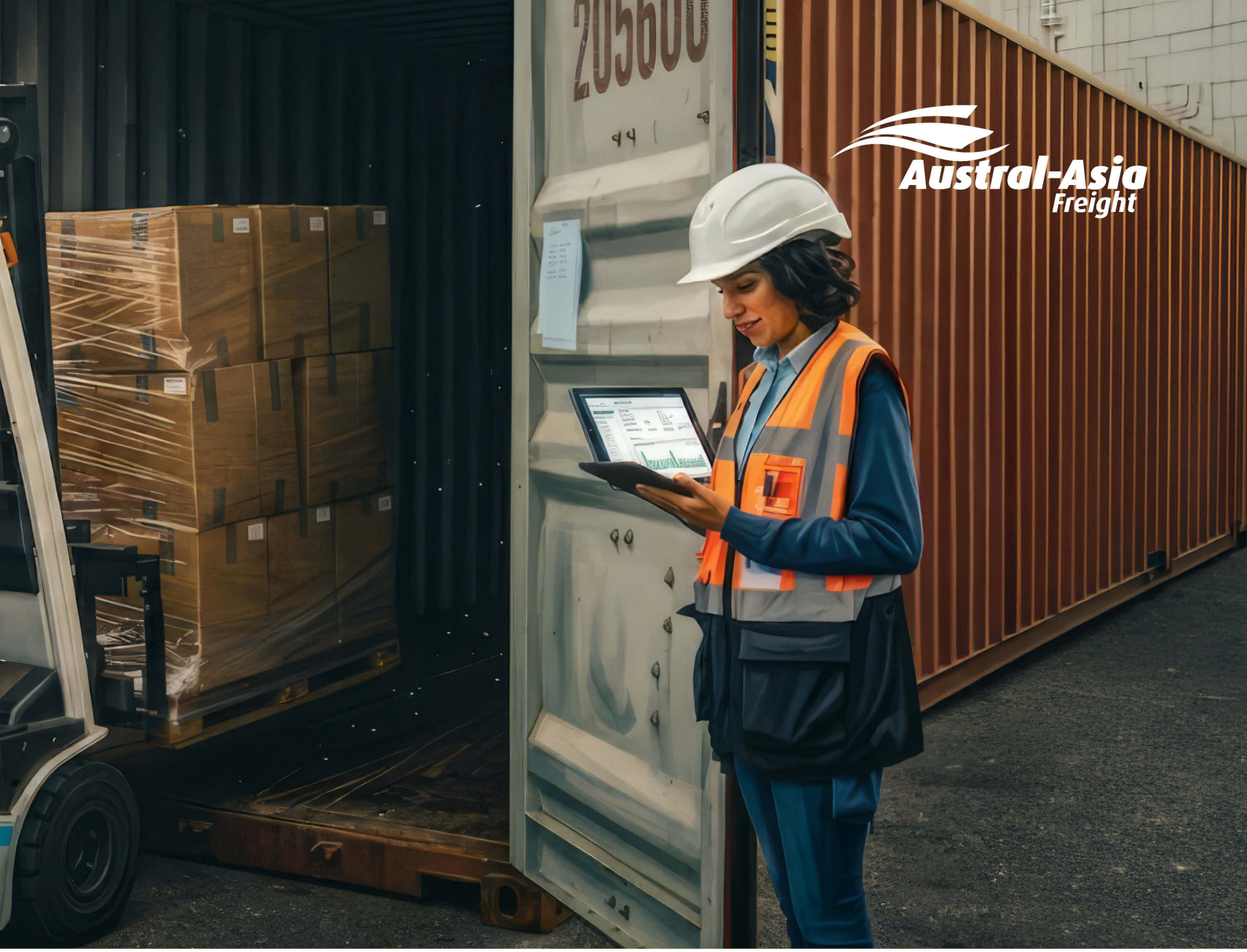
Small and medium-sized businesses are driving a steady rise in imports from India, with demand spanning groceries, textiles, machinery and healthcare supplies. For businesses looking to import goods from India to Australia, freight costs, transit times and customs clearance remain key considerations.

Austral-Asia Freight, a Melbourne freight forwarder and licensed customs broker operating since 1996, works with Australian importers across a wide range of sectors and shipment sizes.

"We work with a very broad range of clients, and grocery items are certainly right up there—along with textiles, leather goods (saddlery, horse rugs, pet accessories), industrial machinery, spare parts and healthcare supplies," says Managing Director Jeff Harrod. "Pretty much whatever India exports, we have a customer for it."

Trade between Australia and India has expanded steadily in recent years, supported by the Australia–India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement, which has reduced tariffs across categories including textiles, pharmaceuticals, machinery and processed foods. Imports from India now cover everything from spices and packaged groceries to clothing, home textiles and light industrial equipment.

For many businesses, especially independent retailers and wholesalers, importing spices, groceries and textiles from India has become a practical entry point. These shipments are often smaller in volume, which makes choosing the right 〈TURN TO #55〉



CONTINUED FROM #54 shipping method critical.

Shipping from India to Australia typically involves either airfreight or less than container load sea freight. Airfreight is suited to urgent or high-value goods and is charged by weight or volumetric weight. LCL shipping from India to Australia allows businesses to move smaller volumes and pay only for the space used within a shared container.

Austral-Asia Freight runs weekly LCL shipping services from Mumbai to Australia and keeps cargo in the same container for the full journey.

"Other forwarders often unpack containers in Singapore. Our cargo stays untouched all the way to Australia," Mr Harrod says. "That means less handling, lower risk of damage or delay, and faster overall transit times."

There are still no direct shipping routes from India to Australia, with most cargo transhipped through Singapore or Port Klang. Transit times are generally around 30 days.

"One day there will be direct sailings from India to Australia which will shorten transit times and that will be good for business," Mr Harrod says. "For now we have to settle on the transhipment service and the transit time should be around 30 days."

> Other forwarders often unpack containers in Singapore. Our cargo stays untouched all the way to Australia. That means less handling, lower risk of damage or delay, and faster overall transit times
>
> **JEFF HARROD, MANAGING DIRECTOR— AUSTRAL-ASIA FREIGHT**

Beyond shipping, customs clearance in Australia remains a key part of the import process. Businesses must ensure correct documentation, tariff classification and compliance with biosecurity requirements, particularly when importing food products, leather goods or plant-based materials.

Austral-Asia Freight manages these steps locally, including order monitoring, booking, documentation, customs clearance and final delivery across Australia.

"Many Forwarders and Customs Brokers are now using offshoring services to handle and process their documents, arrange deliveries and even sales generation," Mr Harrod says.

"One of the biggest risks to businesses in today's world is data and intellectual property theft. If your competitors or an offshore company gain access to your company or your suppliers data, the results can be devastating to your business," he says.

"As a Freight Forwarder and Customs Broker we are privy to your confidential information. You can be comfortable in the knowledge that at AAF, all our work is carried out in Australia by our own staff."

"We won't compromise our service or your information and we won't offshore our responsibilities!"

Founded in 1996, the company continues to support businesses importing goods from India to Australia, with a focus on consistency and local service.

"Having highly skilled and experienced staff is the key to our consistent and reliable service," Mr Harrod says.

"If you decide to work with us you will be working with good local people who know what they are doing. Service counts!"

Melbourne Head Office
Austral-Asia Freight Pty Ltd
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The suffocating pressure to be the flawless, perfect mother

DR. PREETI KHILLAN
@the_indian_sun

Pregnancy is often painted as a glowing season. In many Indian families, it is also a season of blessings, rituals, and high expectations. So when a woman feels low, anxious, angry, numb, or frightened during pregnancy or after the baby arrives, she carries a double burden: the symptoms and the guilt of thinking, "I should be happy, why am I not?"

WHAT PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH MEANS?

The perinatal period covers pregnancy and the first year after birth. Mental health conditions in this time are common. National reporting in Australia estimates about one in five mothers experience a perinatal mental health condition, and anxiety is often reported in the 10% to 20% range. These are not personality flaws or a lack of gratitude. They can affect sleep, appetite, confidence, relationships, and bonding, and they usually need support to improve.

WHEN PERFECTION BECOMES A TRAP

Many Indian women have grown up with the idea that a "good mother" copes quietly, keeps the home running, and puts everyone else first. After birth, that belief can turn into pressure. If feeding is difficult, recovery is slow, or the baby cries for ❮TURN TO #57❯



Representational Photo by Jonathan Borba on Unsplash

Pregnancy and **new motherhood** can bring joy, but also anxiety, exhaustion, and shame—especially when culture, isolation, and impossible expectations collide

CONTINUED FROM #56 hours, shame can arrive fast.

DEPRESSION DOESN'T ALWAYS LOOK LIKE TEARS

Postnatal depression and anxiety may show up as constant worry, panic, irritability, anger, or feeling emotionally flat. Some mothers cannot sleep even when the baby sleeps. Some feel disconnected from the baby and then feel guilty for it. Intrusive, scary thoughts can occur and feel frightening. If you are thinking about harming yourself, or you feel unsafe, this is urgent and you deserve immediate help.

WHEN THE "VILLAGE" IS OVERSEAS

In India, many mothers expect a village after birth: family cooking, holding the baby, and insisting the new mother rests. In Australia, many couples live as a nuclear family. Parents may be overseas, visas delayed, and partners often return to work quickly. The gap between expected support and daily reality can create loneliness, exhaustion, and self-blame.

Before birth, make a simple support plan for the first six weeks. Decide who will cook, who can help with school runs, and who you can call at 2 am. Practical help reduces emotional load quickly.

CULTURE CAN COMFORT, AND IT CAN PRESSURE

Indian traditions can be protective when offered with kindness and flexibility: warm food, rest, prayer, and practical care. But culture becomes heavy when it turns into control or criticism. Some women feel watched and judged about breastfeeding, sleep routines, visitors, weight, or housework. The fear of "log kya kahenge" can keep women silent for months.

WHEN DISTRESS SPEAKS THROUGH THE BODY

Many women do not use the word "depression". They may say, "My body feels weak," "My head is heavy," or "My mind won't settle". They may present with headaches, stomach upset, a racing heart, or constant tiredness. This can be anxiety or depression speaking through the body, and it deserves care.

Indian traditions can be protective when offered with kindness and flexibility: warm food, rest, prayer, and practical care. But culture becomes heavy when it turns into control or criticism

MAKING SUPPORT CULTURALLY SAFE AND INCLUSIVE

For culturally and linguistically diverse families, barriers can be higher: language, stigma, unfamiliarity with the system, and fear of judgement. Australia has strengthened guidance through the 2023 National Perinatal Mental Health Guideline, updated by COPE after being commissioned by the Commonwealth Government, to support consistent screening and clear referral pathways. Multilingual screening helps, and COPE's iCOPE tools are available in many languages, including Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, Urdu, and Nepali.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS BUILDING?

In February 2026, the Australian Govt announced $39.2 million to establish a national network of 20 Perinatal Mental Health Centres, operated through Gidget Foundation Australia. The announcement also noted almost 100,000 Australians are estimated to experience perinatal mental health challenges each year, highlighting the urgent need for accessible care.

PRACTICAL STEPS THAT WORK IN AUSTRALIA

If you are struggling, start with your GP, midwife, obstetrician, or Maternal and Child Health nurse. You can simply say, "I'm not coping," "I'm anxious all the time," or "I feel low most days". Ask to speak alone if you need privacy, and ask for a professional interpreter if English is not comfortable.

A GP can prepare a Mental Health Treatment Plan and refer you to counselling. Medicare allows eligible patients to claim up to 10 individual and 10 group sessions with an eligible mental health professional each calendar year. If money is a worry, ask about bulk-billing, low-cost options, or telehealth. If symptoms are severe, you cannot function, or there are safety concerns, urgent assessment is the right next step.

Perinatal-specific supports can make it easier to begin. PANDA provides perinatal mental health support, and Gidget Foundation services provide perinatal-focused psychological care in many locations and via telehealth.

HOW FAMILIES CAN PROTECT MOTHERS WITH COMPASSION?

For Indian families, the most powerful help is practical and kind. Reduce expectations and protect rest. Help with meals and household work. Keep visits short. Speak gently. Avoid criticism, comparison, and "just be positive". Elders can offer care without control, and partners can help the mother get sleep and attend appointments. The most healing sentence a family can say is, "We believe you, and we will help you get support."

JOY CAN RETURN

Perinatal depression and anxiety are treatable. The earlier you speak, the sooner recovery begins. If joy feels heavy right now, please remember: you are not weak, you are not alone, and you deserve care.

Dr Preeti Khillan is a Melbourne-based obstetrician and gynaecologist with extensive experience caring for women from diverse cultural backgrounds across all stages of pregnancy and birth

Restoring the balance: Why women's health deserves greater attention

DR. PREETI KHILLAN
@the_indian_sun

International Women's Day is often filled with celebrations of women's achievements in business, science, leadership and community life. Yet it should also be a moment for honest reflection. While women have progressed in many fields, one area still struggling to keep pace is women's health.

The theme for International Women's Day 2026 in Australia, "Balance the Scales," could not be more relevant to healthcare. For decades, the balance has quietly tipped away from women in research priorities, funding decisions, the interpretation of symptoms and sometimes even in how quickly women receive the care they need.

Correcting that imbalance is not simply about fairness. It is about improving the health of families, communities and the nation.

WOMEN'S HEALTH AFFECTS EVERYONE

Women often carry the invisible responsibility of managing health within families. They organise appointments for children, recognise early symptoms in elderly parents and juggle their own wellbeing alongside work, caregiving and household responsibilities.

In many ways, women act as the informal health coordinators of families.

When a woman's health suffers, the ripple effect extends far beyond her own wellbeing. Families struggle, workplaces lose productivity and communities feel the impact.

For this reason, women's health should not be seen as a narrow or specialised topic. It is a public health priority that shapes the wellbeing of entire societies.

LONGER LIVES DO NOT ALWAYS MEAN HEALTHIER LIVES

Australia has one of the highest life expectancies in the world and women generally live longer than men. However, living longer does not necessarily mean living healthier.

Research consistently shows that women spend more years coping with illness, disability or chronic health conditions. These years often involve persistent symptoms that may not immediately threaten life but can significantly affect quality of life.

Conditions such as chronic pain disorders, migraine, autoimmune diseases, endometriosis and the complex hormonal changes associated with perimenopause and menopause can affect women for decades.

For many women, the challenge is not simply longevity. It is the ability to live ❮TURN TO #59❯



Representational Photo by Mor Shani on Unsplash

Women's health is not a niche issue—it shapes families, communities, and nations. This International Women's Day, balancing the scales means being heard, studied, and supported

CONTINUED FROM #58 those additional years with good health, independence and dignity.

MEDICINE HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN DESIGNED WITH WOMEN IN MIND

A historical reality in medicine is that many clinical studies were traditionally conducted using predominantly male participants. As a result, early understanding of symptoms, disease patterns and treatments often reflected male physiology.

While medical research has improved in recent years, the legacy of this imbalance remains visible.

Heart disease provides one example. Women can experience symptoms that differ from the classic signs often described in medical textbooks. Yet women have historically been underrepresented in cardiovascular clinical trials. When research does not adequately include women, diagnosis can be delayed and treatments may not fully reflect women's biological differences.

Recognising these differences is essential for delivering more accurate and effective care.

MEDICATION RESPONSES CAN ALSO DIFFER

Another area receiving growing attention is medication safety. Biological differences between men and women, including metabolism, body composition and hormonal variations, can influence how medicines are absorbed and processed.

Evidence suggests that women may experience adverse reactions to certain medications more frequently than men. This does not mean medicines are unsafe. Rather, it highlights the need for research and prescribing guidelines that better reflect the diversity of human biology.

Personalised medicine must therefore include gender-informed research rather than relying solely on generalised averages.

HEALTH FUNDING TELLS US WHAT MATTERS

Funding decisions often reveal underlying priorities. Unfortunately, women's health has not always received investment proportionate to its impact.

Recent analysis in Australia indicates that only a small share of government research funding has been directed specifically towards women's health issues. Much of this funding focuses on reproductive health, leaving many other conditions affecting women under-researched.

When conditions remain underfunded, progress slows. Diagnostic tools take longer to develop, treatment options remain limited and patients often face years of uncertainty before receiving answers.

ENDOMETRIOSIS HIGHLIGHTS THE COST OF DELAYED DIAGNOSIS

Endometriosis illustrates how systemic gaps translate into real-life consequences.

The condition affects millions of women worldwide, yet diagnosis often takes many years. Many women experience severe pain and debilitating symptoms long before they receive a definitive diagnosis.

These delays can affect education, career opportunities, relationships and mental wellbeing. Earlier recognition and improved clinical pathways could dramatically improve outcomes for many women.

The key message is simple: severe or persistent pain should never be dismissed as normal.

LISTENING MATTERS IN HEALTHCARE

Gender bias in healthcare rarely appears as overt discrimination. More often it appears in subtle ways. Symptoms may be attributed to stress, pain minimised or conditions dismissed as part of everyday life.

Recent discussions in Australia, including inquiries into women's pain, have brought these experiences into sharper focus. Many women report feeling unheard or misunderstood when seeking care for chronic conditions.

Listening carefully to patients, especially when symptoms are complex or persistent, remains one of the most powerful tools clinicians have.

HEALTH CHALLENGES CHANGE ACROSS A WOMAN'S LIFE

Women's health needs evolve throughout life and healthcare systems must respond accordingly.

For younger women and girls, mental health support and early intervention are critical. Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among younger Australians, highlighting the importance of accessible and culturally appropriate mental health services.

During midlife, chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and cancers become more prominent health concerns. This reinforces the importance of screening and preventive care.

Later in life, dementia has emerged as a major health issue affecting women in Australia. As populations age, the need for comprehensive support systems for patients and carers will continue to grow.

Addressing women's health therefore requires a lifelong approach rather than a narrow focus on isolated stages such as pregnancy.

LEADERSHIP GAPS WITHIN HEALTHCARE

Representation within healthcare is another important issue. While women make up a large proportion of the healthcare workforce, they remain underrepresented in many leadership roles and specialised fields.

In surgical specialties, for example, women still represent a minority. Creating supportive training environments and encouraging women into leadership roles strengthens the health system by ensuring diverse perspectives guide decision-making.

A PATH FORWARD

Achieving meaningful progress in women's health requires coordinated action.

Research must more consistently include women and analyse sex-specific outcomes. Funding should reflect the true burden of diseases affecting women. Healthcare systems should prioritise earlier diagnosis and patient-centred care.

Equally important is improving health literacy. When women understand their bodies and recognise warning signs early, they are better equipped to advocate for their own health.

Technology, education and public awareness campaigns can all play a role in empowering women with accurate information.

HEALTHIER WOMEN BUILD STRONGER SOCIETIES

Women's health should never be viewed as a niche concern. It sits at the centre of social and economic wellbeing.

Healthy women support healthy families.

Healthy families strengthen communities.

Strong communities build resilient nations.

International Women's Day reminds us how far progress has come. It also reminds us that important gaps remain.

Balancing the scales in healthcare means ensuring women are heard, studied, supported and respected within the medical system.

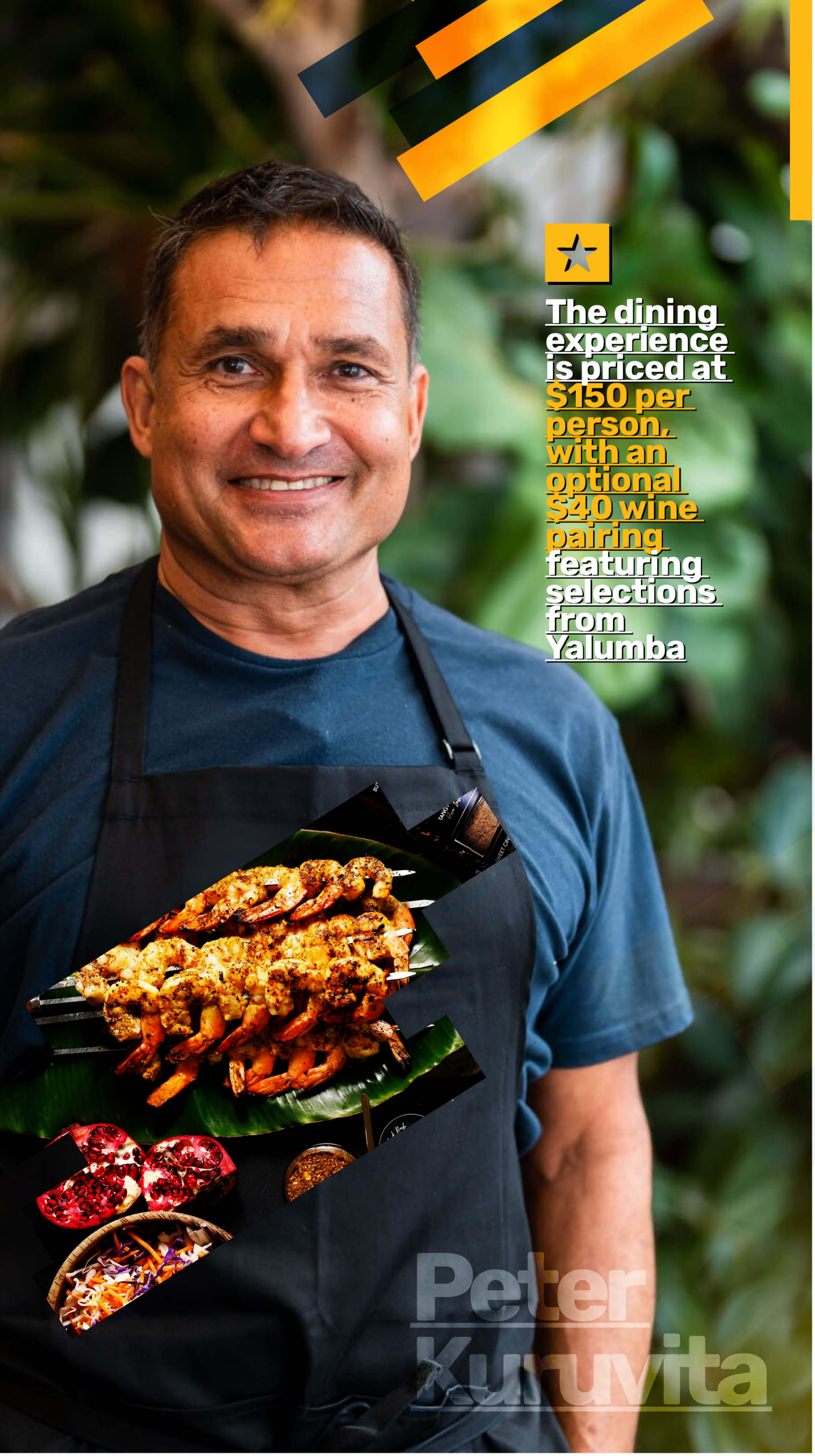
Progress should therefore be measured not simply by how long women live, but by how well they are able to live those years.

Dr Preeti Khillan is a Melbourne-based obstetrician and gynaecologist with extensive experience caring for women from diverse cultural backgrounds across all stages of pregnancy and birth

Chef Peter Kuruvita to launch Sri Lankan pop-up at Crown

Acclaimed chef Peter Kuruvita brought a six-week Sri Lankan-inspired degustation, Serendip, to Crown Melbourne's Evergreen event space





The dining experience is priced at $150 per person, with an optional $40 wine pairing featuring selections from Yalumba

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Acclaimed **chef Peter Kuruvita** will return to Melbourne with a six-week culinary residency at Crown, presenting a Sri Lankan-inspired degustation menu at the Evergreen event space in Crown Towers.

Running from 19 March to 26 April, the residency, titled Serendip, will be held at Evergreen, Crown Towers' event space, where Kuruvita will present a seven-course degustation menu inspired by his Sri Lankan heritage and coastal culinary traditions.

Created exclusively for the residency, the menu brings together Sri Lankan spices, seafood and seasonal ingredients alongside contemporary cooking techniques that have become a hallmark of Kuruvita's style.

Among the dishes featured on the menu are Island Crisp—black kokis served with whipped curd, salmon caviar and chives—and charred sourdough with coconut sambal butter. Other courses include butter-poached crab with roasted coconut pumpkin, wild venison with crisp taro cake and spiced masala sauce, and coastal curry, which pairs crisp-skin snapper with Sri Lankan coconut curry, tamarind and a crayfish croquette.

The degustation also includes a dessert course of autumn berries with coconut yoghurt and roasted white chocolate, followed by a petit four of traditional Sri Lankan love cake served with Dilmah rose and French vanilla tea.

Kuruvita's snapper curry, one of his most recognised dishes, also appears on the menu.

The dining experience is priced at $150 per person, with an optional $40 wine pairing featuring selections from Yalumba, including Barossa Grenache Rosé, Eden Valley Viognier and FSW Botrytis Viognier.

Guests can also upgrade selected courses, including the option to add Kaviari Kristal caviar or chargrilled butter-poached crayfish.

Serendip will run for a limited six-week period at Evergreen in Crown Towers, offering diners a Sri Lankan-inspired degustation experience during Melbourne's autumn dining season.

From festival passion to global brand: The rise of Twista Bros

*Driven by a lifelong love for street food events, founder **Mustafa Hewadpal** spotted a gap in Australia—a dedicated, professional potato twister brand. Here is his story*



Built from the ground up, Twista Bros was shaped through long hours, capital challenges, setbacks, and persistence

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The founder of **Twista Bros, Mustafa Hewadpal**, is an entrepreneur driven by vision, discipline, and a deep understanding of branding within the street food and event space. Inspired by a lifelong love of festivals and high-energy food environments, he identified an untapped opportunity in Australia: transforming the simple potato twister into a recognisable, scalable brand rather than just another market stall product.

While spiral **<TURN TO #64>**



Mustafa Hewadpal



CONTINUED FROM #63 potato snacks existed overseas, no one in Australia had positioned them as a professional, category-owning concept. With a clear vision, he set out to build not just a food stall, but a brand with personality, consistency, and long-term growth potential.

Built from the ground up, Twista Bros was shaped through long hours, capital challenges, setbacks, and persistence. From investing in bold branding and high-impact signage to refining high-volume service systems, every decision was made with scale and consistency in mind.

Today, Twista Bros stands for more than just a product. It represents experience, energy, and memorable moments. With expansion already reaching Dubai and international growth in sight, the brand continues to evolve while staying loyal to its core values of integrity, loyalty, accountability, and high standards.

The founder's mission extends beyond profit: to inspire others to build something of their own, create opportunities, and demonstrate that discipline and consistency truly pay off.

How did Twista Bros start, and what inspired the idea?

Twista Bros started from a simple love for street food and the energy of festivals. I have loved the food and event space since I was young, and I noticed people always gravitated towards food that was fun, visual, and different. I saw Potato Twistas overseas, but no one in Australia was doing them properly as a branded concept. I wanted to take something simple and turn it into a recognisable brand, not just a stall, but a real business with personality, consistency, and scale.

What gap in the market were you aiming to fill?

There was a big gap for a dedicated Potato Twista brand that was professional, fast, family-friendly, and visually exciting. Most operators treated it as a side product. I wanted Twista Bros to own the category and be known as the Potato Twista brand, the same way people associate certain brands with burgers or donuts.

Why the name Twista Bros, what does it represent?

"Twista" comes from the twisted spiral potato itself, and "Bros" represents family, partnership, and unity. It reflects how we operate, close-knit, hands-on, and loyal to the people around us. It is not about one person. It is about building something bigger together.

What were the biggest challenges in the early days?

Capital, long hours, and proving ourselves. We had to build everything from scratch, branding, trailers, suppliers, systems, and relationships with organisers. There were also plenty of setbacks, knockbacks, and people doubting the idea. But I stayed consistent and kept showing up.

What key decisions helped grow the business?

Treating Twista Bros as a real brand from day one. Investing in strong branding, signage, and uniforms. Focusing on TURN TO #65





CONTINUED FROM #64 high-volume events and perfecting a fast service model. Building systems so the business can scale. And staying disciplined with standards.

What makes Twista Bros different from competitors?

We are not just selling a potato. We are selling an experience. When you visit Twista Bros, it should be a happy moment you remember. We understand marketing, presentation, and customer psychology. We focus on doing one core product extremely well.

How do you maintain quality and consistency?

Through clear procedures, training, and standards. Same prep, same cooking process, same seasoning, same presentation. We do not cut corners. If the product is not right, it does not go out.

What values guide your business decisions?

Integrity, loyalty, consistency, and accountability. We care about our reputation and we protect it. We treat people fairly, but we also hold high standards.

How do you divide roles and responsibilities as partners?

All staff have defined responsibilities based on their strengths. We communicate clearly, respect each other's roles, and make decisions together when it matters

What is the biggest lesson you have learned so far?

Branding and systems matter as much as the product. And not everyone will be happy when you grow. You have to stay focused and disciplined.

How do you handle setbacks or difficult periods?

I acknowledge it, learn from it, then move forward. I focus on solutions, not emotion. Every setback becomes a lesson.

How important is customer feedback to your growth?

Very important. Customers show you what works and what does not. We listen, adjust, and improve constantly.

How do you stay relevant in a changing market?

By staying creative and upgrading our branding and concepts while protecting our core product. Social media is always changing and we involve our followers with various video challenges on social media such as TikTok.

What impact do you want Twista Bros to have beyond profit?

To inspire others to build something of their own. To create jobs. To support communities and events. And to show that hard work and consistency pays off.

Where do you see Twista Bros in the next 3–5 years?

Further international expansion. We have expanded to Dubai and want our same concept to be in many other countries.



Sathyan Ilanko and Sarah Black, whose indie track "Maname" is gaining global traction, blending Tamil and English in a viral, word-of-mouth success story // Photo supplied

Sydney-Chennai connect: *Maname* becomes a word-of-mouth hit



OUR REPORTER
𝕏 @the_indian_sun

When Sydney boy **Sathyan Ilanko** and Chennai-based singer **Sarah Black** met during a performance in Sydney, it wasn't with the intention of creating a viral hit. But that meeting would soon lead to a collaboration that is now resonating with listeners across countries.

Their song *Maname*, an indie-pop single released on 13 February is quietly becoming one of the most talked-about tracks online.

Composed and sung by Sarah Black, with lyrics by Sarah and Sathyan, the track blends English and Tamil, a combination that is striking a chord even with non-Tamil audiences.

Sathyan, who penned the Tamil lyrics, is no stranger to viral success. His debut Tamil song *Aasa Kooda*, released on 13 June 2024, became a global sensation, trending across social media platforms. The track, sung and composed by Sai Abhyankkar and Sai Smriti, featured Ilanko's lyrics—including the widely shared line *Nee Pesa Lighta Aasa Kooda*, which quickly became a cultural hook online.

Building on that momentum, Sathyan has steadily expanded his creative footprint. In 2026, he took a major step forward in his music career with the release of his debut solo single *NEERODA*, marking his transition from behind-the-scenes lyricist to independent artist.

Released on 23 January, *NEERODA* is a fully self-driven project, with Ilanko composing the music, writing the lyrics, singing, and performing in the music video—a milestone that highlights his growing range as a complete artist. The track is currently streaming on YouTube, Spotify, Amazon Music, Deezer and Tidal.

Now, with *Maname*, Sathyan has once again captured audiences. The line *Maname Uyire Usure unakenna Pesudha* is spreading rapidly across social media, echoing the viral trajectory of his earlier work.

Sarah Black's expressive voice, combined with her heartfelt composition and Sathyan's evocative lyrics, has created a track that listeners say connects on a deeply emotional level.

The song is not only gaining traction online but also performing strongly across major platforms. On Spotify, it ranks No. 5 on Viral 50 India, No. 1 on Radar Tamil, and No. 4 on Viral 50 UAE. On Apple Music, it features across playlists including Tamil Hits, Tamil Romance, Viral Tamil, Tamil Chill, Breaking Tamil and Indie Risers.

On Shazam India, the track has entered the Viral 50 and sits at No. 6 on the Discovery chart, while also reaching No. 11 on the ITOP chart.

What makes the rise of Maname notable is how it has grown—organically. With no music video, no major label backing and minimal promotion, the song has spread through word of mouth. Thousands of reels, covers and user-generated content across Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have helped amplify its reach.

The collaboration itself was simple. Sarah had a tune, and Sathyan wrote the lyrics, with the song coming together naturally from there.

Sathyan said, "I've always wanted my music and lyrics to connect with people's hearts. Whatever I feel when I create or listen to music, I want others to feel that too."

That connection appears to be at the heart of the song's success.

In a crowded digital space, *Maname* is proving that when a song truly resonates, it can travel far—beyond language, borders and expectations.

Hong Kong comedian Maitreyi Karanth to debut show at Melbourne Comedy Festival

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Hong Kong-based comedian **Maitreyi Karanth** will bring her new show *Maitriarchy* to Melbourne as part of the **2026 Melbourne International Comedy Festival**, marking her Australian festival debut.

The performances will run from 7 to 19 April at Ballers Clubhouse in Melbourne's CBD.

Karanth, a TEDx speaker and recipient of the 2025 AmCham Women of Influence Award for Leading Woman in Arts, Sports, and Leisure, will present a stand-up show built around stories from her life as a traveller, wife, mother and expatriate.

"I can't wait to hit the stage and bring laughter and joy to everyone who needs a little extra cheer right in the new year," Karanth said. "As a comedian, reaching new audiences is absolute bliss. Melbourne, watch out, I am here to deliver!"

The show follows a series of performances in Hong Kong, including 10 sold-out appearances at the city's long-running TakeOut Comedy Club. Promotional material describes the performance as a mix of travel stories, reflections on turning fifty and anecdotes about family life.



Karanth began performing stand-up comedy seven years ago and has since become a regular presence in Hong Kong's comedy circuit. She was the first woman in the city's comedy community to stage a solo theatre show, filling a 400-seat venue.

Her career has included sold-out solo shows and support appearances for international comedians including Tom Cotter, Gina Yashere, Atul Khatri and Pau Ogata.

Karanth first performed in Australia in September 2025 when she appeared at Sydney's Factory Theatre in *Daughter From Another Otter* alongside comedian Annie Louey as part of the Sydney Fringe Festival.

Promotional material for *Maitriarchy* describes the show as a midlife travel story featuring reflections on marriage, family road trips and life at fifty.

Outside comedy, Karanth leads philanthropic work through the Koma Karanth Foundation, which focuses on projects in the Philippines. According to organisers, the foundation has built 44 homes and runs a tutoring school, an old-age community centre and a program providing free lunches and transport for tribal children.

Tickets for *Maitriarchy* are on sale for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival season.


TUNES
TUMBLES

Tunes & Tumbles brings musical comedy to Melbourne stage

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun



A new musical comedy exploring migration, music and identity will debut during this year's **Melbourne International Comedy Festival**, with performer **Pushan Bose presenting Tunes & Tumbles** at Kindred Studios in Yarraville.

The live show blends comedy, storytelling and original music across several genres including pop, hip-hop, EDM, classical, folk, Latino and Bollywood influences. The production premieres eight original songs and follows a format that moves between theatrical character performances and personal reflection.

Performances are scheduled for four shows in April at Kindred Studio Sideroom, with a preview on Thursday 9 April at 6.00pm, an evening performance on Friday 10 April at 6.00pm, a Saturday matinee on 11 April at 4.00pm and a Sunday evening show on 12 April at 5.30pm, making a full weekend lineup.

The show forms part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival season and is designed as a family-friendly performance lasting about one hour and fifteen minutes with a short interval.

According to Bose, the project represents a shift in his career following years in the Indian music industry.

"In 2014, I helped pioneer India's Ballad-Rap movement, with tracks reaching the national Top 5 charts," he said.

"After a decade in the Indian music industry, this project represents a new chapter—bringing that storytelling to the Melbourne stage through a predominantly English musical created with a strong Indian cultural foundation."

Tunes & Tumbles begins with a high-energy opening that features rapid character changes and musical segments presented as theatrical premieres. The second section, titled Tuned by Time, moves in the opposite direction, reflecting on the performer's experiences and influences while tracing the cultural and musical shifts that shape his work , offering a deeper, introspective contrast.

The themes centre on migration and personal reinvention. Bose said these ideas sit at the centre of the production.

Kindred Studios in Yarraville. Tunes & Tumbles will run for four shows during the festival season, offering audiences a musical comedy performance shaped by Bose's background in Indian music and his experience living and performing in Melbourne.

Australia to host U19 Women's Tri-Series in Brisbane and Gold Coast

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Australia will host England and Sri Lanka in a nine-match U19 Women's Tri-Series from April 6 to 18, with fixtures split between Brisbane and the Gold Coast as part of efforts to strengthen the pathway for emerging women's cricketers.

The series will feature a mix of 50-over and T20 matches, with games scheduled at Ian Healy Oval in Brisbane and Bill Pippen Oval on the Gold Coast. The tournament is expected to provide young players with exposure to international conditions ahead of future ICC U19 and senior competitions.

Western Australia's Tegan Williamson will captain the Australia U19 Women's side. Emily Powell of New South Wales and Ayaka Stafford of Queensland have been named in the leadership group, having previously toured Sri Lanka with the national U19 squad. Williamson also represented Australia at the last ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup.

Former Australia captain Meg Lanning will join the setup as Development Coach for the first time on tour, working alongside Head Coach Kristen Beams as part of the national pathways program.

Cricket Australia's Head of National Development, Sonya Thompson, said the series would test the group across formats and conditions. "This multi-format tri-series provides a terrific opportunity for our young group to learn, grow and test themselves in a competitive environment," she said.

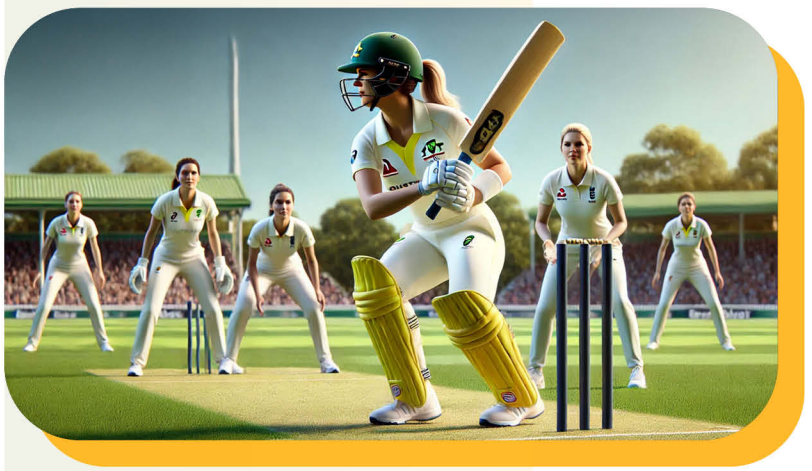
She added that hosting England and Sri Lanka would broaden the players' experience. "Hosting England and Sri Lanka give our players exposure to different playing situations and match conditions, which is a huge part of their development on and off the field."

Thompson said the tri-series fits into a longer-term plan for women's cricket in Australia. "The series forms part of our long-term commitment to strengthening women's pathways and preparing players for future ICC U19 and senior international opportunities."

All three teams will compete across nine matches, beginning with 50-over fixtures from April 6 to 8 in Brisbane, followed by T20 matches from April 11 through to April 18 across both venues.

Australia's squad includes players from across the country, with representation from Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, reflecting the national spread of the development program.

The tri-series adds to Australia's broader schedule of women's cricket and is expected to draw attention to the next group of players progressing through the system.



AUSTRALIA U19 WOMEN'S SQUAD:

- Tegan Williamson (captain) (WA/Wanneroo Districts Cricket Club)
- Alyssa Dermody (WA/Perth Cricket Club)
- Aurora Mavros (NSW/Campbelltown Camden District Cricket Club)
- Ava Drury (NSW/Northern District Cricket Club)
- Ayaka Stafford (QLD/Western Suburbs District Cricket Club)
- Ayla Johnson (QLD/Valley District Cricket Club)
- Chelsea Sonter (QLD/Western Suburbs District Cricket Club)
- Emily Powell (NSW/Sydney Cricket Club)
- Eva Baird (VIC/Prahran Cricket Club)
- Filippa Suesee (QLD/Western Suburbs District Cricket Club)
- Indira Panelli (SA/Kensington District Cricket Club)
- Ira Aery (VIC/Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club)
- Mia Barwick (TAS/North Hobart Cricket Club)
- Shiloh Julien (NSW/Parramatta Women's Grade Cricket Club)

U19 WOMEN'S TRI-SERIES:

50-Over Fixtures:

- 6 April—Australia U19 v England U19 at Ian Healy Oval, Brisbane
- 7 April—Sri Lanka U19 v England U19 at Ian Healy Oval, Brisbane
- 8 April—Australia U19 v Sri Lanka U19 at Ian Healy Oval, Brisbane

T20 Fixtures:

- 11 April—Australia U19 v England U19 at Bill Pippen Oval, Gold Coast
- 12 April—Sri Lanka U19 v England U19 at Bill Pippen Oval, Gold Coast
- 13 April—Australia U19 v Sri Lanka U19 at Bill Pippen Oval, Gold Coast
- 15 April—Australia U19 v England U19 at Ian Healy Oval, Brisbane
- 17 April—England U19 v Sri Lanka U19 at Ian Healy Oval, Brisbane
- 18 April—Australia U19 v Sri Lanka U19 at Ian Healy Oval, Brisbane

Further details about the Play On! Sports Vouchers program, including how families can apply and how activity providers can register, are available here:

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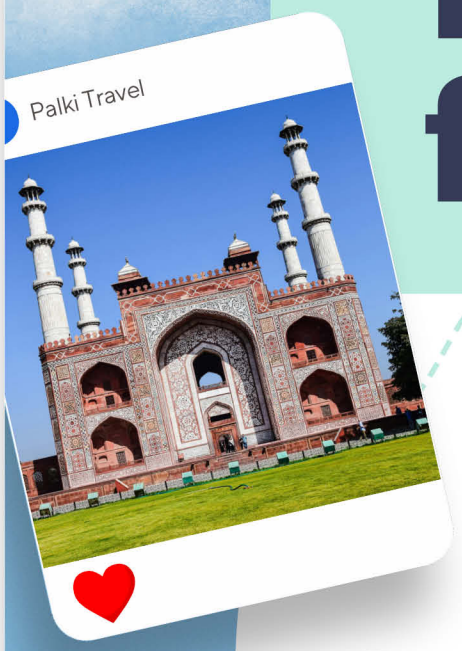
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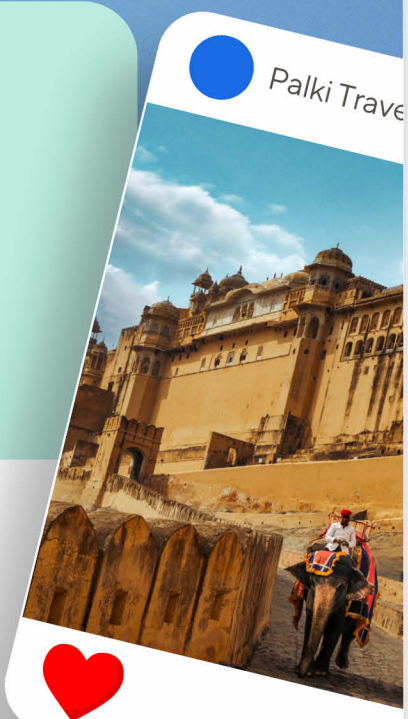
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