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THE Indian Sun PLUS

APRIL 2026
VOLUME 15 ISSUE 191

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CROWNING PURPOSE

*Gold Coast teen **Abhilasha (Abby)** combines her Miss Teen Galaxy finals bid with cancer awareness platform, **The Cancer Cause***

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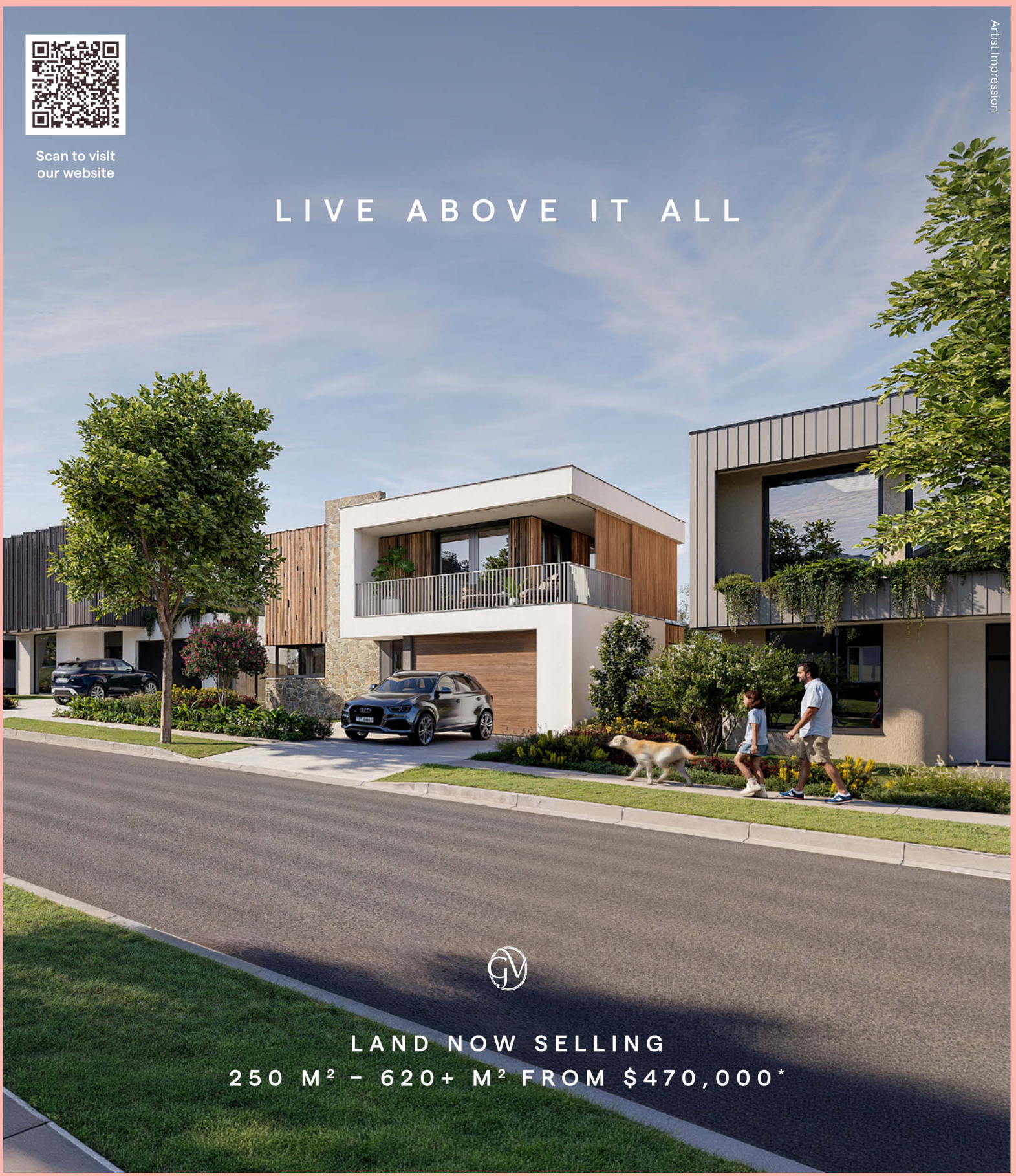
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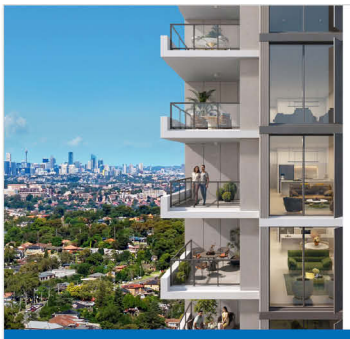
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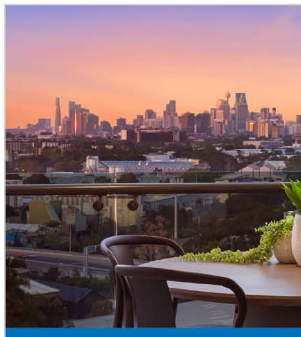
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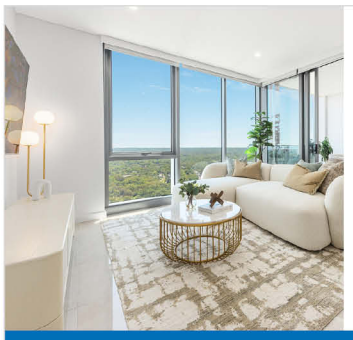
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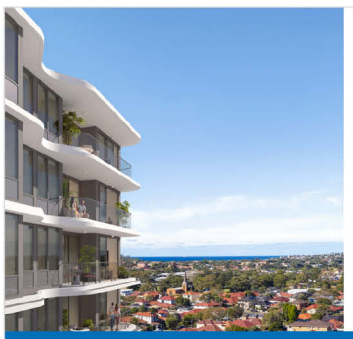
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Queensland's Diverse Voices, Volunteering, Youth, and Green Steel Shine



Dear Readers,

Welcome to this month's edition of *The Indian Sun*. As always, we bring you stories that reflect the richness of our multicultural state—from the corridors of policy-making to the quiet power of volunteering, the determination of youth advocacy, and the promise of international research partnerships. This issue arrives as communities across Queensland prepare to mark two vibrant and significant festivals: Holi and Ugadi. Celebrated with great enthusiasm by the Indian diaspora.

Our first story examines the newly appointed Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council, an 11-member body that will serve for the next three years. With representatives from Indian, Chinese, Filipino, African, Jewish, Taiwanese, Māori and Azerbaijani backgrounds—including six women and members from Cairns, Townsville and Mackay—the council continues its statutory role of advising the Minister for Multiculturalism on opportunities and barriers facing culturally and linguistically diverse people. Minister Fiona Simpson has welcomed the refreshed cohort, which includes reappointee Beny Bol OAM, the first Māori member Dean Harawira, and interfaith advocate Gail Paratz OAM. While supporters praise the council as a structured link between communities and policymaking, critics remind us to keep scrutinising its tangible influence on outcomes. Nonetheless, the council's very existence signals a continuing commitment to inclusive governance.

In our second piece, we celebrate Palani Thevar, a Queensland community leader awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2026 Australia Day Honours for his service to Tamil and Indian communities. Mr Thevar offers a humble and powerful message: volunteering's true reward lies not in medals but in stronger communities, better connections and a sense of purpose that money cannot buy. Having spent years helping families settle and connect across Queensland, he urges everyone to contribute, however small. From mentoring a young person to assisting a neighbour, his words remind us that even modest investments of time yield extraordinary returns—reducing loneliness, building skills and creating a more caring society. His OAM, he says, is simply proof that quiet, consistent giving leaves a lasting imprint.

Our third story introduces Abhilasha ('Abby'), a 15-year-old student from Tallai on the Gold Coast, who has been selected as a national finalist in Miss Teen Galaxy Australia 2026. Abby has used her platform to launch 'The Cancer Cause', an awareness initiative born from the childhood loss of her uncle to cancer. For Abby, pageantry is not merely about competition but about finding the courage to speak up for causes that matter. As she balances dance, public speaking and her studies at Somerset College, she hopes to pursue clinical psychology to support those facing emotional challenges. Her journey reflects a growing trend among young pageant participants who are linking their visibility to genuine community advocacy, proving that age is no barrier to making a meaningful difference.

Finally, we turn to a landmark joint Australia-India research effort. Scientists from CSIRO and the Indian Institute of Science, in partnership with Jindal Steel and RESCONS Solutions, have successfully demonstrated that agricultural waste—specifically rice husk pellets—can partially replace coal in steel production. In a world-first full-scale trial at a commercial steelworks in Odisha, blending five and ten per cent biomass pellets generated a steady flow of synthesis gas for iron ore reduction without compromising performance. Steel production accounts for roughly one-tenth of global carbon emissions, and India's rapidly expanding sector currently emits above the global average. If adopted nationwide, researchers estimate emissions could fall by 50 per cent—some 357 million tonnes of CO_2 annually—while also reducing the need for field burning of crop residues. This partnership, part of the India Australia Green Steel Research Partnership, offers a hopeful pathway toward decarbonising one of the world's most carbon-intensive industries. As always, we invite you to read deeply and reflect on the many ways Queenslanders—and our global neighbours—are building a more inclusive and sustainable future..

Best wishes,
NICK ATTAM
Editor, The Indian Sun—Queensland

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NEXT EDITION DEADLINE
10 May 2026

PUBLISHED BY
Digital Media & Co Pty Ltd
0424 934 804
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L:R Mrs Vivien Hanrahan, Ms Anna Jones, Ms Ree Ali, Mr Emil Rahimov, Mr Nick Attam, Mr Hermann Vorster (Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs and International Student Attraction), Hon Fiona Simpson (Minister for Women and Women's Economic Security, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Multiculturalism), Mrs Gail Paratz OAM, Ms Grace Yu, Mrs Pinky Singh OAM, Mr Michael Choi OAM

QLD refreshes Multicultural Advisory Council with new appointments

OUR REPORTER *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun

Queensland has confirmed the latest membership of its **Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council**, appointing 11 individuals to serve for the next three years. The council, set up under the Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 to advise the Minister for Multiculturalism on the opportunities and barriers facing culturally and linguistically diverse people, will continue its role in informing government on community needs and cultural inclusion.

The new cohort includes individuals from a range of backgrounds, representing Indian, Chinese, Filipino, African, Jewish, Taiwanese, Māori and Azerbaijani heritage. Members bring varied experience in community engagement, business, education and advocacy, with several having personal experience of migration or refugee journeys. Six appointees are women, and the council also includes representatives from regional Queensland, including Cairns, Townsville and Mackay.

Fiona Simpson, Minister for Multiculturalism, said the refreshed council reflects interest shown during a recent consultation process and will support the government's focus on building stronger, safer and cohesive communities. She thanked outgoing members for their contributions. The council is tasked with representing the views of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds across the state and advising on how policies and programs can respond to their needs.

Among those appointed is community leader Beny Bol OAM, who has been reappointed and continues his work on the council. The latest intake also includes the first Māori member, educator and community advocate Dean Harawira. Gail Paratz OAM, known for her work in interfaith networks and on antisemitism, and Chu-Ching Yu, with decades of experience in international education and migration, are also part of the council. Other members include former Queensland MP Michael Choi OAM and Baptist pastor Emil Rahimov, a recent recipient of a Minister's Multicultural Queensland Award.

The council's role, as defined by government policy, involves advising on the needs, aspirations and contributions of culturally diverse communities and promoting the principles of the multicultural charter within Queensland. It also offers input on how government services can be more responsive to people from diverse backgrounds.

Supporters of the council's work say its continued existence offers a structured link between diverse communities and policymaking, helping ensure that voices from across the state are heard. Critics of such advisory bodies in general sometimes question how much influence they have on concrete policy outcomes, suggesting ongoing scrutiny of their impact remains important.

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Palani Thevar says volunteering offers one of the strongest returns a person can make, with even small acts of service helping build stronger communities

Palani Thevar says volunteering pays back far more than it costs

OUR REPORTER *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun

Queensland community leader **Palani Thevar** says his Medal of the Order of Australia is proof that volunteering can have a lasting impact, both for the people receiving support and for those giving their time.

Mr Thevar was recognised in the 2026 Australia Day Honours for service to the Tamil and Indian communities of Queensland. While the award shines a light on decades of work, he says the real value of volunteering is not found in medals or public recognition.

Instead, he believes the return on investment comes through stronger communities, better connections and a sense of purpose that money cannot buy.

"Volunteering is something everybody can do, you can always do something, small or big," Mr Thevar said.

"Everyone can help the community work together and grow together and build a better society."

Mr Thevar has spent years supporting multicultural communities across Queensland, helping people settle, connect and feel part of the wider community. His work has included supporting Tamil families, promoting Indian culture and encouraging people from different backgrounds to take part in community life.

He said many people avoid volunteering because they believe they do not have enough time, enough money or enough experience.

His message is that even a small contribution can have a powerful effect.

For some people, volunteering may mean helping at a local event, mentoring a young person, supporting a cultural group or assisting a neighbour. For others, it could mean offering professional skills, helping with fundraising or simply being available when someone needs support.

Mr Thevar said volunteering often creates benefits that reach far beyond the original task. People build friendships, improve confidence, gain experience and become more connected to the place where they live.

Research has consistently found that volunteering can improve wellbeing, reduce loneliness and strengthen local communities. Employers also often value volunteer work because it can build leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

Queensland's multicultural communities rely heavily on volunteers, particularly in local associations, sporting clubs, religious organisations and cultural groups. Much of that work happens quietly and often without public attention.

Mr Thevar's recognition is likely to encourage more people to think about the role they could play in their own community.

While an OAM is one of Australia's highest honours, Mr Thevar says the biggest reward has always been seeing people come together and support one another.

He believes volunteering offers one of the strongest returns anyone can make, because even a small investment of time can help create a more connected and caring society.

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.

Holi in Mackay: A colourful celebration of community spirit

OUR REPORTER *MACKAY*
@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 #13〉















CONTINUED FROM #12 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.

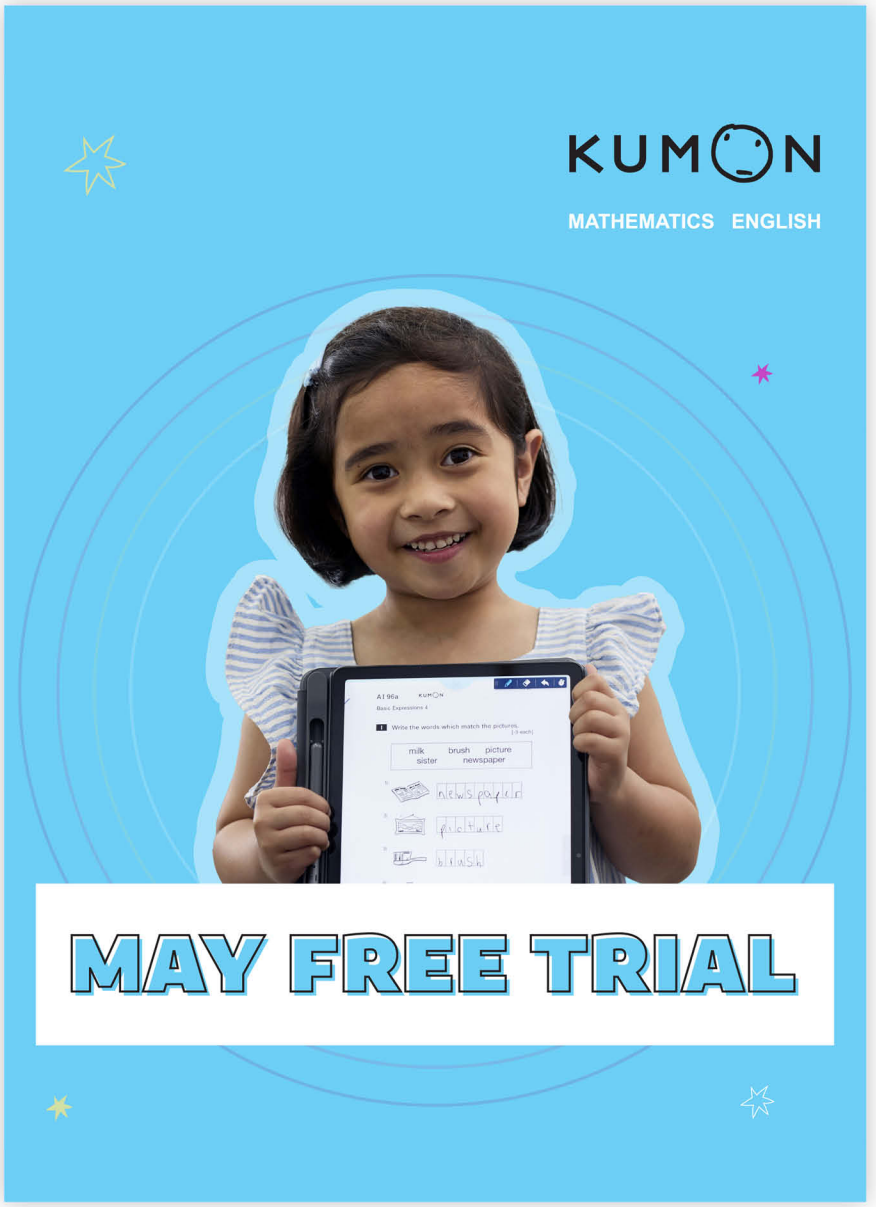
"If there were any shortcomings on our part, we sincerely apologise and appreciate everyone's understanding. Events like these are always a learning journey for us," Sandhya added.

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.





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 #15〉

CONTINUED FROM #14 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.



If you can read this in English and

हिंदी, तो आप विक्टोरिया पुलिस में एक करियर के लिए अपनी सोच से कहीं अधिक उपयुक्त हैं

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SCAN ME

MADE FOR MORE

विक्टोरिया पुलिस। अभी भर्ती हो रही है।

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

VICTORIA State Government

VICTORIA POLICE

Indian Traditional New Year Celebration lights up Roma Street Parklands

NICK ATTAM
@the_indian_sun

The **Indian Council of Australia, Queensland Inc. (ICAQ)** proudly hosted its flagship **Indian Traditional New Year (ITNY) Celebration** on 14 March 2026 at the iconic Roma Street Parklands Amphitheatre—a spectacular evening celebrating culture, heritage, and community unity.

The celebrations commenced with the arrival of VIPs and multicultural community leaders, followed by a sacred Invocation and Lighting Ceremony, setting a spiritual and auspicious tone for the evening.

The programme featured an extraordinary lineup of performances that showcased the depth and diversity of Indian and multicultural traditions. The evening opened with a soulful Bhajan or devotional song by Art of Living, followed by a cultural presentation by Baal Vikas Varga. The audience then witnessed a powerful Veda and Strotra recitation by the Bhat Brothers, along with a melodious Sanskrit song by Ramaa Apurv Kusoorkar.

The evening's highlight was a stunning series of pure classical dance performances, including Mohiniattam, Odissi, Bharatanatyam, and Kuchipudi. These classical presentations beautifully reflected India's timeless artistic traditions.

The cultural journey continued with vibrant regional and multicultural performances. The audience enjoyed a Marathi performance by Rashmi Jogalekar, a Nepalese performance by Mala Aryal, and a lively set by the Philippines 〈TURN TO #17〉



CONTINUED FROM #16

Kalinangan Dance Company. This was followed by Raamdoota Strotram, Maharashtra Folk by Noopur Dance Studio, a Ghoomar performance, and Bhangra by Rich Virsa. The stage also came alive with traditional mixes by Taal Tarang and Let's Bollywood, as well as a semiclassical fusion by Tapori Squad. The evening concluded with a spectacular Traditional Fashion Show, celebrating the diversity of Indian attire and heritage.

We were honoured by the presence and addresses of distinguished dignitaries, including Mr. Neetu Bhagotia, Consul General of India; Cr Pye Augustine; Emma Comer MP; Senator Paul Scarr; Julie-Ann Campbell MP, representing the Hon. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese MP; Mr. Bart Mellish MP; and Mayor Jon Raven.

A special highlight of ITNY 2026 was the ICAQ Office Bearers Q&A, along with a proud generational leadership transition. The new office bearers are President Shreya Sharma, Secretary Manas Kulkarni, and Treasurer Akshar Kathi.

ITNY continues to celebrate the diversity of Indian New Year traditions—including Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Baisakhi, Vishu, Tamil Puthandu, Bihu, Navreh, Cheti Chand, Sajibu Cheiraoba and more—fostering unity, cultural pride, and multicultural harmony in Queensland.

ICAQ extends heartfelt gratitude to all performers, volunteers, dignitaries, and attendees who made this event a resounding success.

"The world respects you when you respect yourself." ITNY stands as a proud reflection of this belief—honouring heritage while strengthening Australia's multicultural identity.



TANQ brings Ugadi to life with culture, community and celebration in North Queensland

NICK ATTAM
@the_indian_sun

Families and community members gathered in North Queensland to mark **Ugadi**, as the **Telugu Association of North Queensland** hosted an evening centred on culture, tradition and shared experience.

The event opened with a ceremonial lamp lighting, a familiar feature at Indian cultural gatherings, symbolising the start of proceedings and a focus on knowledge and positivity. Organisers followed this with an introduction to the meaning of Ugadi, including Panchanga Sravanam, a traditional almanac reading that reflects on the year ahead.

Performances formed the core of the programme, with younger members of the community taking a leading role. Singing, dance and group presentations brought a mix of classical and contemporary styles to the stage, offering a snapshot of how traditions are being carried forward by the next generation.

A children's fancy dress segment drew strong participation, with families turning out in support. The segment highlighted the role of community events in creating spaces where cultural identity can be expressed in accessible and engaging ways.

The evening 〈TURN TO #19〉







As multicultural communities across Australia continue to mark cultural occasions, events like this reflect both continuity and adaptation, shaped by the people who take part

CONTINUED FROM #18 moved at a steady pace, with solo and group performances interspersed throughout. A short break allowed for informal conversations among attendees, an aspect organisers often see as just as important as the formal programme in building connections.

Later in the event, group performances brought participants together on stage, reflecting a shared sense of identity among attendees.

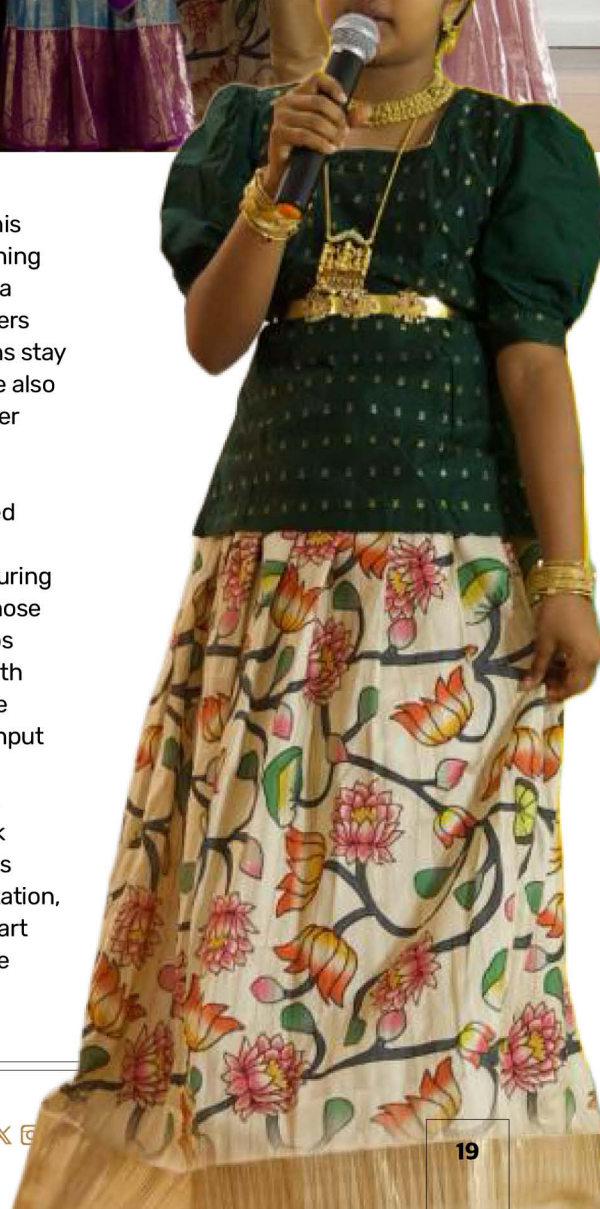
Prizes were awarded to recognise participation and effort, followed by a vote of thanks and a group photograph.

Food remained a central part of the celebration. Ugadi Pachadi, a traditional dish associated with the festival and known for combining different flavours, was served alongside a community meal. For many, this provided a moment to connect beyond the performances and formalities.

Community events such as this continue to play a role in maintaining cultural practices among diaspora groups across Australia. Supporters say they help younger generations stay connected to their heritage, while also offering an opportunity for broader community engagement.

At the same time, organisers acknowledge the balance involved in planning such events, from encouraging participation to ensuring traditions remain accessible to those less familiar with them. For groups like the Telugu Association of North Queensland, these gatherings are shaped as much by community input as by tradition itself.

As multicultural communities across Australia continue to mark cultural occasions, events like this reflect both continuity and adaptation, shaped by the people who take part and the settings in which they are held.











AAQ Ugadi celebrations bring Brisbane's Telugu community together

NICK ATTAM
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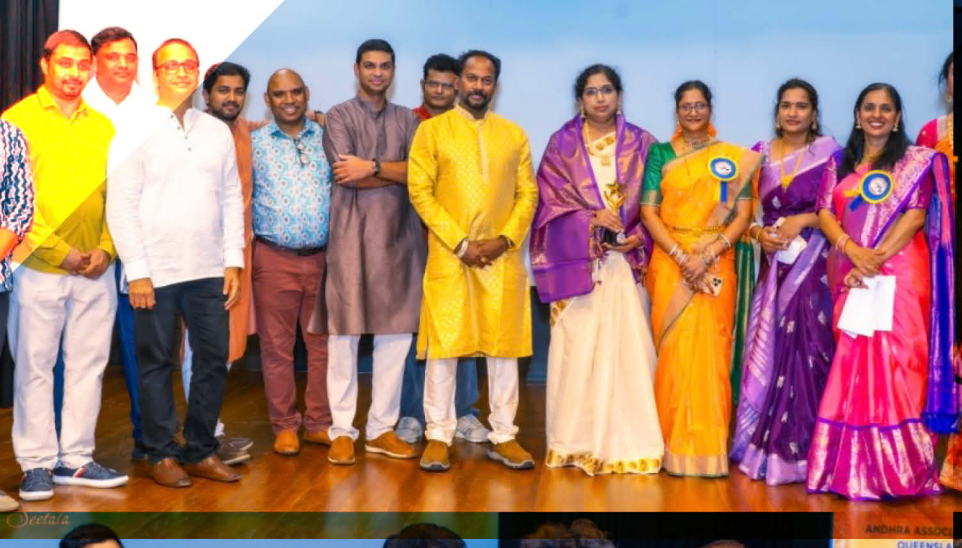
More than 500 people attended the Andhra Association of Queensland's Ugadi celebrations in Brisbane, with the event bringing together members of the Telugu community for an evening of cultural performances, community recognition and traditional festivities.

The program began with a ceremonial lamp lighting led by Sudha Sankar, who also served as Master of Ceremonies for the AAQ Prestigious Awards segment. The wider event was hosted by Aswini and Sainath, while Janakiram Manava and Suneetha Jakkampudi coordinated the cultural performances.

Guests were treated to a range of performances throughout the evening, reflecting Telugu language, music and dance traditions. Organisers said the event was designed to celebrate Ugadi while also recognising members of the community for their contributions across a range of fields.

One of the main highlights of the evening was the presentation of the AAQ Prestigious Awards 2025 to 2026. Krishna Mohan Kanduri 〈TURN TO #21〉

AAQ said it takes pride in recognising local community members who contribute their time and effort to supporting others. Community awards have become a regular part of the org's Ugadi celebrations

















<CONTINUED FROM #20> from BSK received the Community Service Excellence award, while Padma Priya Nori from Palaka Balam Telugu Badi was recognised in the Cultural and Language category.

Akash Racha received the Youth Change Maker award, while Vimala Punugu was named Volunteer of the Year. Telugu Lahari was recognised for Group and Community Contribution, while Geetha Grandhi from SKED received the Rising Star of the Year award.

Saathvika Muturu was awarded Excellence in Studies, while Hema Latha Gaddireddi received the Community Star Award for her work organising blood donation camps and supporting homeless people through AAQ initiatives.

Seven-year-old Nissi Anvika Vadlamudi received the Junior Rising Star award for her fundraising efforts.

AAQ said it takes pride in recognising local community members who contribute their time and effort to supporting others. Community awards have become a regular part of the organisation's Ugadi celebrations and are intended to highlight the work of people who may not always receive wider public attention.

The event was supported by a number of sponsors, including Mortgage Winner, Harcourts, Kamesh Painting, Remix Rise Springfield and Property Visionaries Buyers Agent. Brinda Kuppili sponsored the shields and medals presented during the awards ceremony.

Food for the event was provided by Hyderabad Flavors, Dosa Hut Gold Coast, Siri Food Paradise, Spice Venue Gold Coast and Cafe Hyderabad in Taigum.

The celebrations marked another large turnout for AAQ and reflected the continued presence and connection of the Telugu community across Queensland.



Harmony Day event at Springfield Lakes draws community leaders and strong turnout

OUR REPORTER *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun

More than 500 meals were served and over 60 volunteers took part as the Vedanta Centre hosted a Harmony Day celebration at Springfield Lakes on 21 March, bringing together community members, elected representatives and cultural groups.

The event featured a keynote address by Giridharan Sivaraman, who spoke about his personal journey and the broader challenges facing Australia. Drawing on family experiences and his long association with the Vedanta movement, he reflected on recent developments in the country and addressed issues of racism.

In his remarks, Sivaraman offered a message of optimism, saying



Australia has the capacity to respond constructively to social tensions and build a more inclusive society.

A panel of state, local and federal representatives also shared their experiences, with discussions ranging from Harmony Day reflections to the impact of cultural identity in public life. Speakers included Fiona Simpson, Paul Scarr, Shayne Neumann, Charis Mullen, Paul Tully and Pye Augustine.

The programme included cultural performances, family activities such as face painting and a petting zoo, and a series of market stalls. Food prepared by volunteers through Maa Sarada's Kitchen drew strong participation, with more than 500 meals served and over $4,500 raised to support community initiatives linked to the centre.

Swami Atmeshananda, President of the Vedanta Centre, said the event was designed to strengthen community ties and reflect shared values.

"Harmony Day reminds us that despite our differences, we are all connected by our shared humanity. When we come together with respect, kindness, and openness, we create a community where everyone feels valued and at home," he said.

Organisers said the turnout reflected strong local engagement, with residents staying on after the formal programme to participate in activities and community discussions.

The event formed part of broader Harmony Day celebrations across Australia, aimed at promoting multiculturalism, inclusion and social cohesion.

shakti global

Nurturing Holistic Well-being

Shakti Health Dialogue: Cancer Prevention & Early Detection

June 7, 2026
Sunday || 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Helensvale Community Centre

31-37 Discovery Dr, Helensvale QLD 4212

Our eminent speakers



Prof. Jasotha Sanmugarajah

Professor Jasotha Sanmugarajah is a senior Medical Oncologist at Gold Coast University Hospital and Professor of Medicine at Griffith University. With over 35 years' experience in Internal Medicine, Hematology, and Oncology, she is committed to patient-centred care, medical education, and research. US board-certified and a Fellow of multiple prestigious colleges, she serves as Clinical Sub-Dean and leads several Phase I–III clinical trials.



Dr. Preeti Bagga

Dr. Preeti Bagga is a Radiation Oncologist at Gold Coast University Hospital with nearly 20 years of experience. She completed her specialist training in India, earning a Gold Medal and Young Achievers Award, and gained her Australian specialist qualification in 2012. She also completed a clinical observership at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. She has served as Director of Training for Radiation Oncology Trainees and Senior Lecturer (University of Queensland) and continues to contribute to Queensland's training network and research projects. Most importantly, she is passionate about cancer prevention, early detection, and patient education in a clear and approachable way.



A/Prof. Rhea Liang

A/Prof. Rhea Liang is a general and breast surgeon, medical educator, and MD Curriculum Lead at Bond University. She researches and advocates in breast cancer, medical education, diversity, and workplace culture. Dr. Liang serves on the British Journal of Surgery editorial board and the American College of Surgeons International Relations Committee, and has led the Operate With Respect project of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the federal A Better Culture curriculum development. In 2023, she became the first Australian woman awarded FRCSEng(Hon) (Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons England) to recognise two decades of contribution to surgical education and workforce diversity.



Manojavam "Manu" Masabattula

Mackay student builds platform to guide future doctors as Aussie Med Guide launches

NICK ATTAM *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun

A Queensland student who secured entry into medicine at Monash University is now helping others navigate the same pathway, with a new platform for medical school applications set to launch on 31 March.

Manojavam Masabattula, known as Manu, grew up in Mackay and achieved competitive ATAR and UCAT results, earning a place in one of the country's leading medical programs.

Rather than stepping away from the process after his own success, he developed a platform aimed at addressing gaps in access to reliable information for aspiring medical students.

The idea began shortly after his Monash interview. "I thought, wouldn't it be cool if there was a map of Australia with all the medicine universities on it," he said.

What started as a personal spreadsheet has grown into Aussie Med Guide, a platform that brings together key elements of the medical admissions process. The website, aussiemedguide.com, will go live on 31 March.

It includes information on UCAT preparation, ATAR benchmarks, interview formats, rural entry pathways, scholarship options and application deadlines, which are often spread across multiple sources.

Students applying for medicine in Australia must manage a range of requirements at once, including academic results, admissions testing and multiple application systems such as VTAC, UAC, QTAC, SATAC and TISC. Each university has its own criteria, which can change over time, making the process difficult to track.

The platform aims to simplify that process by presenting the information in a structured format, allowing students to compare options and plan their applications without relying on fragmented or outdated sources.

Masabattula said his experience growing up outside a metropolitan centre shaped his approach. He built the platform with students from regional areas in mind, where access to tutoring networks and guidance can be limited.

The project also reflects a broader focus on access to education. By organising complex admission requirements into a single resource, the platform seeks to support students who may not have existing networks or prior exposure to the process.

While the current focus is on medicine, the model is being developed for other fields. Plans are underway to expand into engineering, law and commerce, applying the same structured approach to different university pathways.

Further expansion may include international versions, with potential platforms for the United Kingdom and New Zealand, where the UCAT is also used for medical admissions.

Aussie Med Guide is positioned as both an information resource and a community platform, where students and families can access guidance and connect with others going through the same process.

For many families, particularly within Australia's multicultural communities, education remains a central priority. Platforms that provide clear, accessible information are likely to play a growing role in supporting students through competitive entry pathways.

Visit: ***www.aussiemedguide.com***

Brisbane hosted Festival of Chariots on 18 April

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.



Townsville gala backs breast cancer care with community push

OUR REPORTER *BRISBANE*
@the_indian_sun

An evening of formal dress and fundraising is set to bring Townsville's business and community circles together, with proceeds aimed at strengthening healthcare support across North Queensland.

Lexus of Townsville will host the **Mater Foundation Driven in Pink Gala Ball**, positioning the event as both a social fixture and a funding drive for medical services. The night will support Mater Foundation Chicks in Pink, a programme focused on assisting people affected by breast cancer through care services and practical support.



Former North Queensland Cowboys player Gavin Cooper is scheduled to host the evening, which begins with canapés and drinks on the lawn before moving into a three-course dinner with a full drinks package. Organisers have also lined up live entertainment from local performers, giving the event a strong community flavour.

Funds raised are intended to contribute to patient care, equipment, and facilities across the region. According to organisers, this includes resources that help improve treatment environments and ease the experience for patients and families navigating serious illness.

Breast cancer remains one of the most common cancers affecting Australian women, and community fundraising initiatives continue to play a role in supplementing clinical care. Programmes such as Chicks in Pink often focus on practical assistance, including support services that extend beyond hospital treatment.

The gala will feature both live and silent auctions, with a mix of high-value items aimed at encouraging strong bidding. Among the headline pieces are a pink diamond ring from Jewellery by Design, Swisse Calibre watches for men and women, and a selection of luxury holiday packages. Organisers expect these offerings to drive a substantial portion of the night's fundraising total.

Events of this kind have become a familiar part of the fundraising calendar in regional centres, where local businesses often take a leading role in supporting health services. While they bring in vital funds, they also serve as a point of connection between donors, healthcare providers, and those directly impacted by illness.

For attendees, the appeal lies in combining a social night out with a cause that resonates locally. For organisers and beneficiaries, the challenge is to ensure that funds raised translate into measurable improvements in care delivery and patient support.

Tickets for the gala are now available, with Lexus of Townsville encouraging early bookings as interest builds. Further details can be found through the official event page and the company's social media channels.

The success of the evening will ultimately be judged not by its atmosphere, but by the support it generates for people facing breast cancer and the services that care for them.

Queensland pushes fast-track plan for Taroom Trough oil project

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun



Queensland is moving to accelerate development of the Taroom Trough, positioning it as the country's first new oil field in decades while calling on federal authorities to speed up approvals.

The Crisafulli Government has announced a new development plan aimed at coordinating infrastructure and cutting assessment timelines, arguing the project could strengthen domestic fuel supply at a time of ongoing global uncertainty.

Early production has already begun on a small scale, with Shell extracting around 200 barrels of crude oil a day from the basin. The oil is being refined into diesel at iOR's Eromanga facility, marking the first flow of fuel from the region into the domestic market.

State officials say the next phase will focus on scaling up production by streamlining roads and other key infrastructure through a framework overseen by the Coordinator-General. The proposed Taroom Trough Development Plan is intended to guide activity across the basin and bring different approvals under a single, coordinated process.

At the same time, the state government is urging Canberra to classify the project as nationally important and assess it under the National Interest Fast-Track Assessment Pathway. The mechanism is designed to reduce duplication between state and federal processes, though it has drawn scrutiny in other cases over how it balances speed with environmental oversight.

Premier David Crisafulli said expanding domestic oil production is central to reducing reliance on overseas supply chains, pointing to risks exposed by recent global disruptions. Ministers have framed the project as part of a broader push to secure fuel for transport, agriculture and industry.

Deputy Premier Jarrod Bleijie said the government had already directed work on a regulatory pathway to support infrastructure delivery, while Natural Resources and Mines Minister Dale Last signalled a willingness to back exploration with faster approvals.

Supporters of the project argue it could bring investment and jobs to regional Queensland, while adding to national energy security. Others, including some environmental groups and policy analysts, are likely to question the long-term role of new oil developments as Australia navigates energy transition goals and emissions targets.

The federal government has yet to indicate whether it will grant the project fast-track status. Its decision will shape how quickly the Taroom Trough moves from early production into a larger-scale operation, and how it fits within the country's broader energy policy.



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 #29❯



CONTINUED FROM #28



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."





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 #31>**

Photos supplied





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

SHAUN PATTERSON CHIEF OF SALES &MARKETING— SIMONDS HOMES

CONTINUED FROM #30 "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

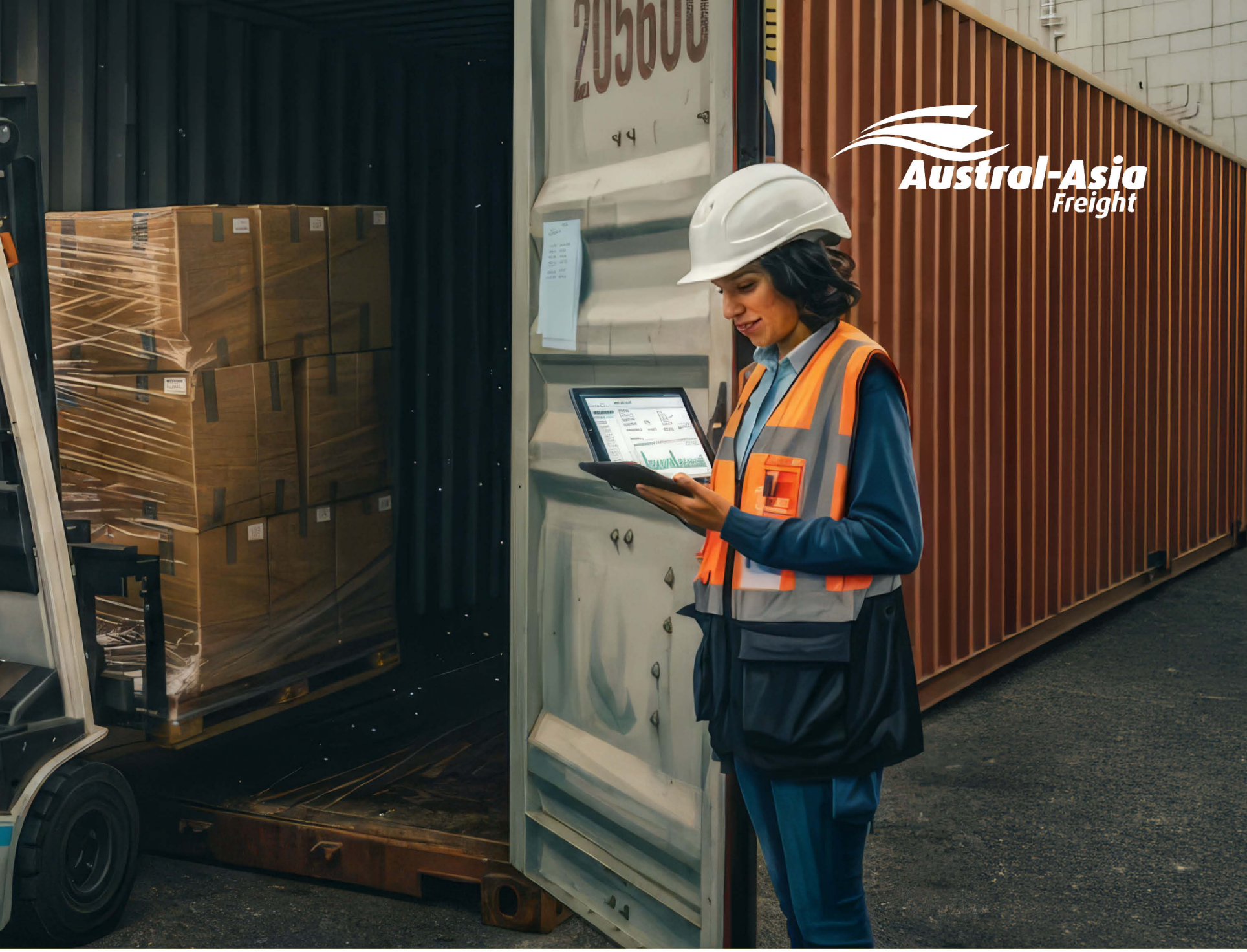
Small and medium-sized businesses are driving a steady rise in imports from India, with demand spanning groceries, textiles, machinery and healthcare supplies. For businesses looking to import goods from India to Australia, freight costs, transit times and customs clearance remain key considerations.

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 #33〉



CONTINUED FROM #32 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
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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 #35❯



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

CONTINUED FROM #34 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 #37❯



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

CONTINUED FROM #36 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.

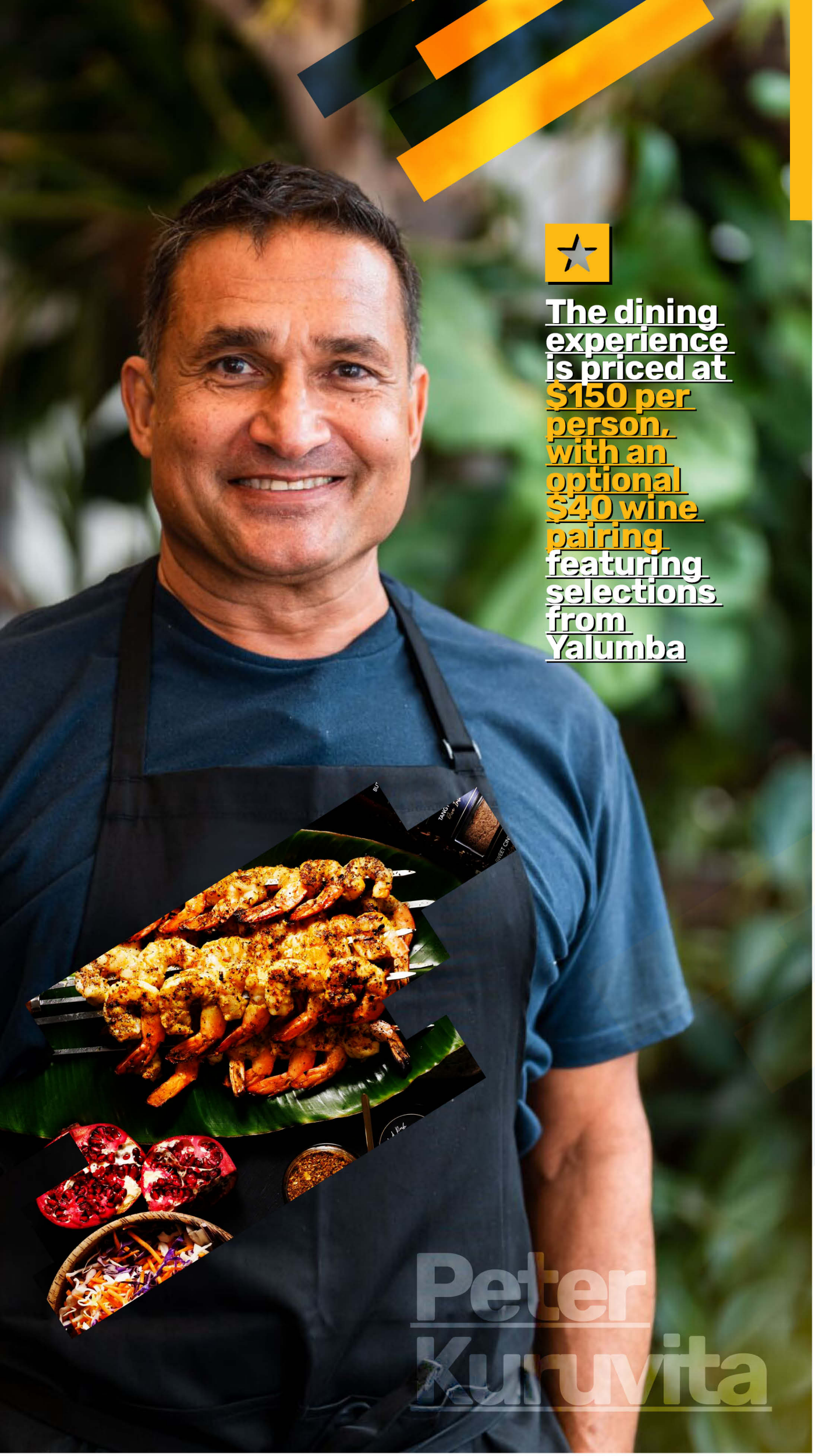
Progress should therefore be measured not simply by how long women live, but by how well they are able to live those years.

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





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

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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*



Mustafa Hewadpal

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 #42>**





CONTINUED FROM #41 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 #43





CONTINUED FROM #42 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?

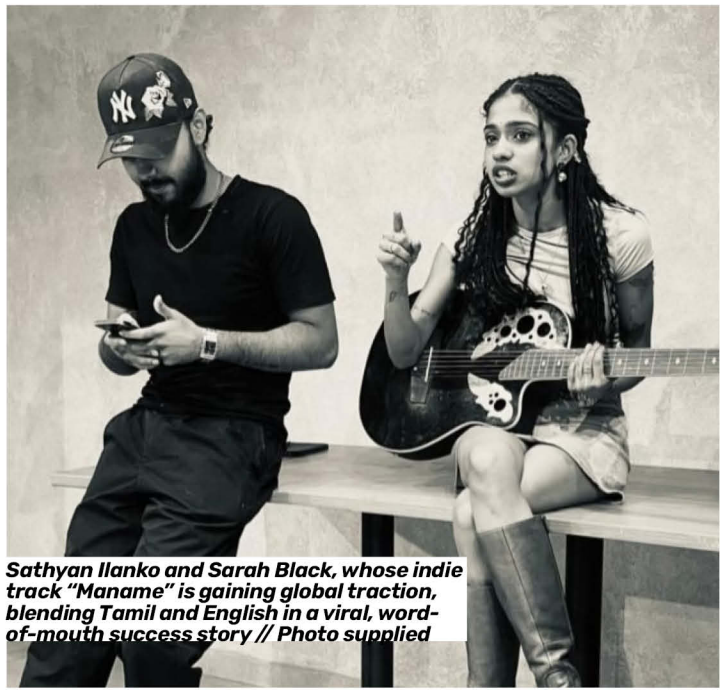
By staying creative and upgrading our branding and concepts while protecting our core product. Social media is always changing and we involve our followers with various video challenges on social media such as TikTok.

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

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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.

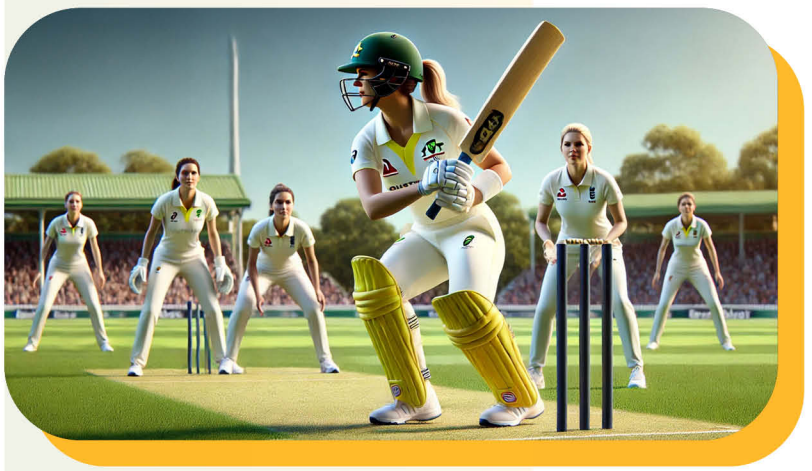
She added that hosting England and Sri Lanka would broaden the players' experience. "Hosting England and Sri Lanka give our players exposure to different playing situations and match conditions, which is a huge part of their development on and off the field."

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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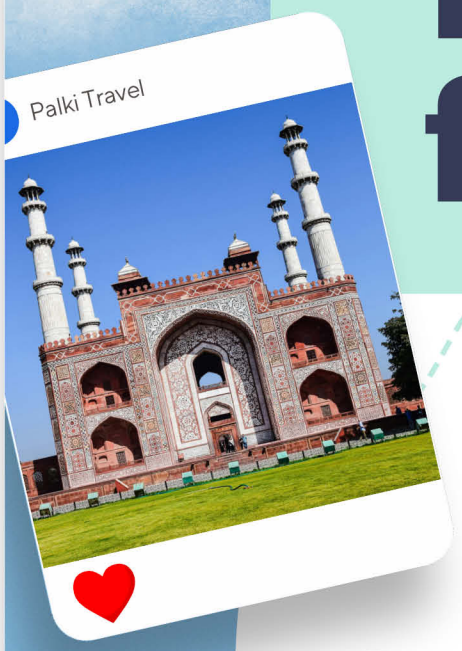
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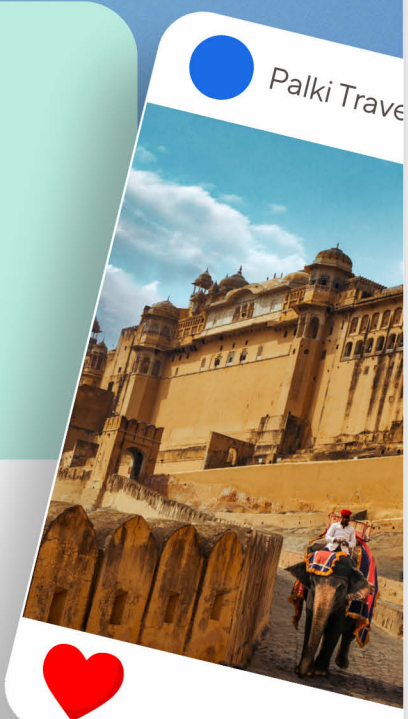
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