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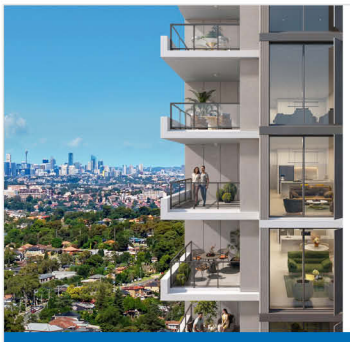
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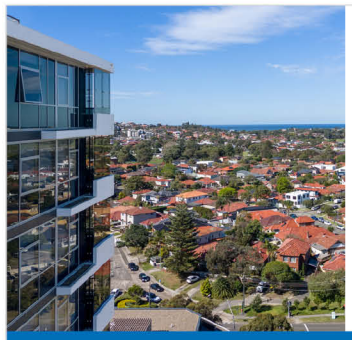
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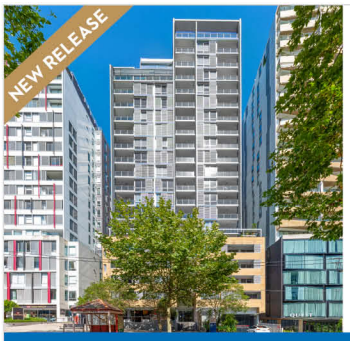
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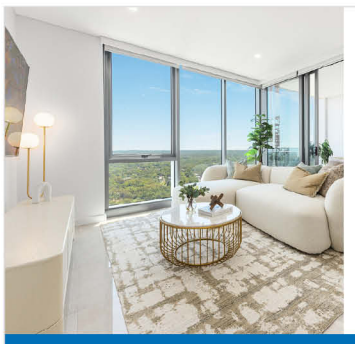
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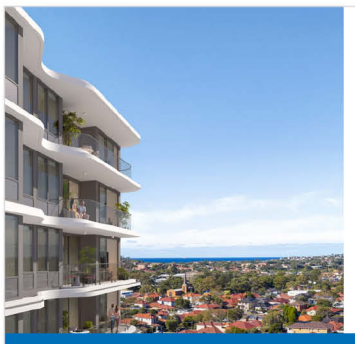
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Between Seasons, Between Stories

Dear Readers,



The last stretch of autumn carries a sense of pause before winter settles in, a time when stories linger a little longer and ask to be noticed. This edition reflects that mood, where personal journeys, national data and policy ideas come together in ways that feel immediate and long in the making.

Indira Laisram's cover story captures that through the journey of Jai Singh, whose path from nursing to entrepreneurship speaks to a wider migrant instinct to build, adapt and take risks. Arriving with limited means and no network, he moved through aged care wards before stepping into a very different space, opening what he says is South Australia's first independent Ben & Jerry's scoop shop. His reflection that many people he cared for carried regrets is not abstract. It shaped a decision to act early rather than wait. In a country that continues to draw people seeking opportunity, such stories are familiar, yet they still carry weight for what they reveal about courage and timing.



Alongside this sits a broader demographic shift. For the first time, India has overtaken England as Australia's largest overseas-born population. The margin is narrow, yet the meaning is wide. With 971,020 Indian-born residents compared to 970,950 from England, the change reflects years of steady migration rather than a single moment. It points to an Australia that is gradually reshaping its social and economic centre of gravity, driven by education pathways, skilled migration and family networks that continue to grow. This is less about one group replacing another and more about a country adjusting to its present.

Another story turns to visibility. The creation of the Office of the Indigenous Economy marks a step towards measuring what has long been undercounted. Led by Dr Siddharth Shirodkar, the initiative will track economic activity driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with the aim of building a clearer picture of Indigenous contribution to national output. For years, policy has worked around gaps in data. This effort signals a move to ground those conversations in evidence, particularly as future economic activity increasingly intersects with land and communities that have often been overlooked.

There is also something instructive in the story of Kiran Jose, whose silver medal in the 400 metres at the national junior championships carries years of preparation behind a race that lasts less than a minute. His account of balancing Year 12 studies with training, often using travel time to revise, points to a discipline that extends beyond sport. For many young Australians, especially from migrant families, the path is rarely linear. It moves through expectation, doubt and small, steady gains that only become visible later.

Even in cricket, where tradition holds firm, the hesitation around private investment in the Big Bash League reflects a system weighing change against stability. The lack of consensus among governing bodies shows how difficult it can be to align commercial opportunity with the broader interests of the game. Growth, whether in sport or society, rarely arrives without friction.

Taken together, these stories sit alongside each other, offering different views of a country in motion. A young entrepreneur stepping away from a stable profession, a population shift decades in the making, an effort to better understand Indigenous economic activity, a student athlete finding his pace, and a sporting code debating its future. Each carries its own rhythm.

As autumn fades, these changes appear less sudden and more cumulative, shaped by decisions that often begin quietly. The season may be turning, but the direction has been forming for some time.

Best wishes,
SIDDHARTH SURESH

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From ANZACs to Indian soldiers, Melbourne remembers together

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Melbourne marked **ANZAC Day** with dawn services, marches and quiet moments of reflection across the city, as communities gathered to honour those who served and sacrificed in war.

From the south-east to the bayside and the northern suburbs, hundreds stood in the early morning light to remember the fallen, many repeating the simple words: Lest we forget.

In Pakenham and Officer, volunteers from Gurdwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar, Officer, joined dawn services alongside the wider community. They paid tribute not only to Australian and New Zealand



servicemen and women, but also to the often-overlooked contribution of Indian and Sikh soldiers.

During the First World War, an estimated 1.3 to 1.5 million Indian soldiers served, while more than 2.5 million volunteered in the Second World War. Despite making up a small percentage of India's population, Sikhs formed a significant part of the British Indian Army, with tens of thousands killed or wounded across both wars. Community members said their courage and sacrifice remain an enduring legacy, said Harpeet Singh Kanra, a community leader of the Gurdwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Officer.

Across the City of Monash, locals gathered at dawn to pause and reflect. Councillor Elisha Lee said the service was a 〈TURN TO #9〉

CONTINUED FROM #8

moment for the community to come together and honour the contributions of all servicemen and women.

Further south, State MP Tim Richardson described the dawn service at Chelsea Longbeach RSL as "really moving," with thousands of residents attending to pay their respects and reflect on the service of Australians and New Zealanders.

In the eastern suburbs, students from schools in Wheelers Hill, Glen Waverley and Mulgrave took part in commemorations at the Glen Waverley Cenotaph. They presented a handmade wreath of rosemary and native flowers, in what organisers described as a deeply moving moment that left many feeling reflective and united.

At Oakleigh Memorial, community member Siddharth Maitrak said standing before the engraved names of local soldiers brought home the human cost of war. He spoke of families who waited, lives cut short, and veterans who returned with unseen scars, reminding those present that "freedom is never free."

In Altona, a strong crowd turned out for the ANZAC Day march and dawn service at the local RSL. A highlight was the presence of Korean War veteran Ray Duckett, whose attendance was warmly acknowledged. Volunteers were also thanked for preparing breakfast for servicemen, members and guests after the service.

Emergency services joined commemorations in the north-east, with Eltham CFA and Research CFA taking part in a march to the Montmorency-Eltham RSL for a community service at Petrie Park.

Services across Keilor East, Watsonia and Greensborough also saw strong turnouts, with people of all ages gathering under clear skies to remember the courage and sacrifice of those who served.

Whether through marches, wreath-laying or quiet reflection, the message across Melbourne was clear—the ANZAC spirit remains strong, carried forward by communities determined to remember.





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Community members and organisers gather at the ANZAC Jawan Cenotaph in Cherrybrook, holding red poppies during the ANZAC Day service marking the 111th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. Photo supplied

Cherrybrook service marks ANZAC legacy of Australian and Indian soldiers

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A community service at the **ANZAC Jawan Cenotaph in Cherrybrook** has marked the 111th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, bringing together Defence personnel, government representatives and local families to honour the contribution of Australian and Indian soldiers.

The ceremony was hosted by the Australia India Cenotaph Committee, a project of the Hindu Council of Australia, in partnership with the Hornsby RSL Sub-Branch. Organisers said the event reflected a shared military history and the growing recognition of Indian service personnel within the ANZAC story.

The service opened with a welcome address by Sai Paravastu, National President of the Hindu Council of Australia, who highlighted the national role of the cenotaph as a symbol of Australia–India military ties.

Anand Manickam, Vice President of the Australia India Cenotaph Committee, led the program as Master of Ceremonies, coordinating the sequence of formal proceedings.

The Australian 〈TURN TO #11〉









❮CONTINUED FROM #10❯ Army Cadets—202 Unit mounted the Catafalque Party under the leadership of CAPT (AAC) Natalie Jackson, setting a formal tone for the service.

Speakers included Julian Leeser, Federal Member for Berowra, Dr Nirav Kumar, Deputy Consul General of India in Sydney, Capt. Smriti Murali Krishna, an ADF officer and chaplain, and Murray Norman, Chief Executive of Faith NSW, also known as Better-Balanced Futures. Their addresses focused on remembrance, community ties and the historical links between Australia and India through military service.

Local support came from Hornsby Shire Council, Cherrybrook Technology High School and the IABBV Hindi School, whose students and representatives took part in the ceremony.

Interfaith prayers, hymns and a wreath-laying ceremony formed part of the service, followed by the Ode of Remembrance, the Last Post and the national anthems of Australia and India.

The ANZAC Jawan Cenotaph in Cherrybrook is recognised in New South Wales as a memorial dedicated to ANZAC soldiers of Indian heritage. Organisers said the site continues to serve as a place for reflection on shared history and ongoing ties between the two countries.





Youth voices set agenda ahead of Women Deliver conference in Melbourne

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A youth-led pre-conference in Melbourne has set the tone for the **Women Deliver 2026 Conference**, bringing together young leaders from across the world to define priorities and push for accountability ahead of the main global gathering.

Held on April 27 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, the Youth Pre-Conference began at 8:00am, bringing together a diverse group of young leaders from across countries and movements into a structured program designed to move quickly from discussion to collective positions.



The session opened with a segment that grounded participants in the global context and featured youth leadership voices. Organisers said the pre-conference offered an opportunity for young people to help shape the direction of wider discussions at the main conference.

After the initial session, participants moved into breakout discussions, choosing from three tracks that reflected core themes expected to carry through the broader Women Deliver 2026 Conference agenda: youth participation and leadership, access, rights and resistance, and feminist and youth financing.

Each track brought participants together in small groups to work through shared challenges and priorities. The format encouraged discussion, exchange of ideas and collaborative problem-solving, with participants building on each other's contributions rather than working in isolation.

The structure of the sessions reflected a shift in how youth engagement is 〈TURN TO #13〉

CONTINUED FROM #12 being approached in global forums. Rather than positioning young people as observers, the pre-conference placed them at the centre of agenda-setting, with a focus on defining clear "asks" to be carried forward.

The program later moved into a co-creation session, where participants reconvened to present priorities from each track and develop shared messages. This stage marked a transition from discussion to consolidation, with ideas shaped into collective positions.

The inclusion of this roundtable is an attempt to bridge a common gap in global conferences, where youth perspectives are often gathered but not directly addressed by those in positions of influence.

Participants presented shared priorities and outlined expectations for the days ahead. These outcomes are expected to feed into the discussions taking place at WD2026.

Throughout the day, additional spaces were set up to support networking and collaboration. These included open networking areas, a resource hub with advocacy tools, and structured activities designed to connect participants working on similar issues.



The program also included quieter spaces and informal engagement formats, reflecting an awareness of the intensity of such gatherings and the need for flexible participation.

The themes discussed during the pre-conference align closely with wider debates within the gender equality sector, particularly around funding, access to rights and the role of young people in decision-making processes.

Background global discussions points to a growing concern that youth-led movements remain under-resourced despite playing a central role in advocacy and community work. Conversations on financing, in particular, have increasingly focused on how funding structures can better support grassroots organisations and reduce barriers to access.

The emphasis on financing within the youth program reflects these concerns, with one of the three core tracks dedicated to examining funding challenges and exploring more flexible and equitable approaches.

Similarly, the focus on access, rights and resistance highlights the conditions many young activists are working within, including restrictive political environments and ongoing debates around rights and representation.

The leadership track, meanwhile, centres on participation and influence, with discussions aimed at strengthening youth voices within global and local systems.

Organisers have framed the Youth Pre-Conference as a space where ideas can be tested and refined before entering larger, more formal discussions at the main conference. The outputs from the day are expected to inform sessions and conversations across WD2026.

As the broader conference opens, the priorities identified by young participants are likely to be reflected in discussions on accountability, funding and the role of civil society.

The Youth Pre-Conference also highlights a wider effort to embed youth engagement more directly into global processes, moving beyond symbolic inclusion towards more structured participation.

With the main conference now underway in Melbourne, attention will turn to how these youth-led priorities are carried forward and whether they influence the direction of policy discussions and commitments emerging from the event.





Teachers and educators attend the Annual Community Languages Teachers Conference at the University of Sydney, highlighting growing demand for language education across diverse communities // Photo supplied

Minns backs community language teachers as demand rises

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Community language education has been described as an underused strength of New South Wales, with Premier Chris Minns using a major teaching conference to highlight its role in the state's future.

Speaking at the Annual Community Languages Teachers Conference at University of Sydney, Minns addressed what organisers said was the largest gathering of community language teachers ever held in Australia. The event was organised by the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools, which represents a wide network of after-hours and weekend schools.

Minns told attendees that while digital tools continue to promote language learning, they cannot replace the role of 〈TURN TO #15〉



NSW Premier Chris Minns addresses the Annual Community Languages Teachers Conference at the University of Sydney, calling community languages an undervalued asset for the state

Minns also framed bilingualism as a practical advantage, noting that the ability to speak English alongside another language can open up opportunities for individuals

CONTINUED FROM #14 a skilled teacher. He said classroom teaching remains central to helping students connect with both language and culture, adding that teachers play a key role in encouraging curiosity and sustained interest.

He also framed bilingualism as a practical advantage, noting that the ability to speak English alongside another language can open up opportunities for individuals and benefit the country more broadly. His remarks reflect a wider policy interest in strengthening cultural and economic links with international partners.

Conference speakers pointed to changing demographics as a key driver behind growing demand for language education. Federation president Lucia Johns said language plays an important role in social inclusion and participation, particularly in a country shaped by migration. She argued that Australia's future engagement with the region depends on maintaining and developing language skills beyond English.

Academic perspectives reinforced this view. John Hajek from the University of Melbourne told the conference that the proportion of Australians speaking a language other than English at home continues to rise. By 2021, that figure had reached around 22 per cent nationwide, with higher levels recorded in major cities such as Sydney and Melbourne.



Lucia Johns addresses the Annual Community Languages Teachers Conference at the University of Sydney, highlighting the role of language in social inclusion and global engagement

Sydney in particular has seen steady increases, with more than a third of residents now using another language at home. This shift is reflected in the growing number of community language schools and the expanding range of languages being taught.

Across New South Wales, programmes now cover a wide spectrum, from widely spoken languages such as Mandarin, Arabic and Hindi to smaller or emerging community languages including Dinka and Karen. Organisers say this reflects both established migrant communities and newer arrivals seeking to maintain cultural connections.

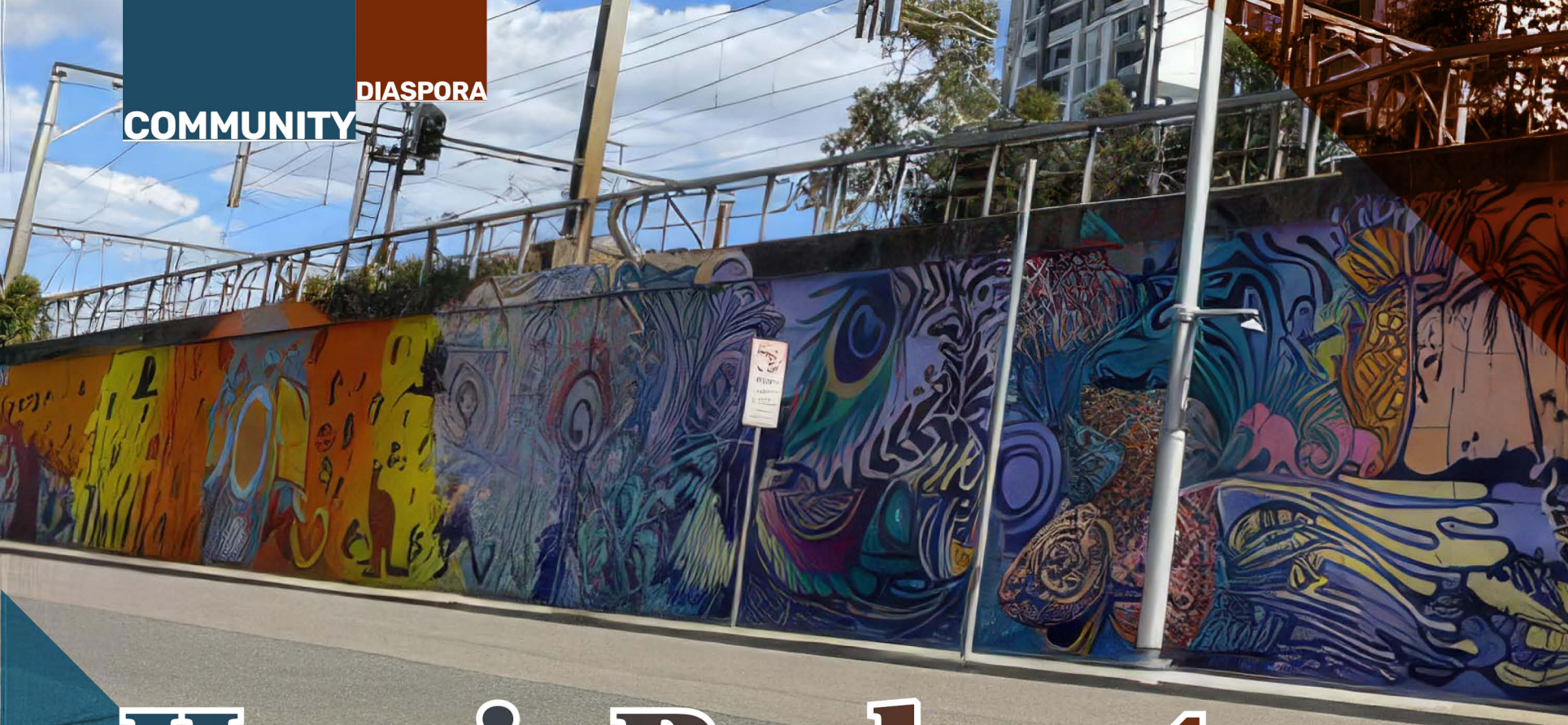
At the same time, challenges remain. Community language schools often rely on part-time teachers, volunteer support and limited funding. Advocates have long called for more stable investment, better training pathways and stronger integration with the mainstream education system.

Minns' comments were welcomed by organisers as recognition of the sector's contribution, though stakeholders note that ongoing support will be key if programmes are to keep pace with demand. The rise in student numbers and language diversity presents both an opportunity and a logistical challenge for schools operating outside standard hours.

Professor Hajek told the conference that community language education is likely to become more prominent as Australia's population continues to change. He said the combination of demographic trends and community interest points to steady expansion in the years ahead.

For teachers gathered at the conference, the focus remained on practical outcomes. Many work directly with children balancing mainstream schooling with weekend or evening classes, often driven by family expectations and cultural ties. Their role, speakers noted, extends beyond language instruction to include cultural understanding and identity.





Harris Park gets 100-metre mural celebrating Little India

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Harris Park is now home to the **largest and longest mural in the Parramatta** area, with a new artwork stretching more than 100 metres along Station Street East.

The large-scale mural series has been designed as a celebration of Harris Park's Little India precinct, capturing the area's food, culture and community through colourful public art.

According to the City of Parramatta, the mural reflects Harris Park's evolution into one of Sydney's best-known multicultural destinations.

The artwork features a mix of Indian and Australian influences, drawing on scenes from across the precinct from sunrise through to nightfall. It includes references to the Parramatta River, native wildlife, festivals, restaurants and local street life.

Organisers say the mural also reflects the migration stories and sense of belonging that have shaped the area over time.



Martin Zaiter joins Dr Andrew Charlton and artists Gauri Torgalkar, Em Hatton and Patrick Hunter during celebrations for the new mural in Harris Park's Little India precinct

The work was created by artists Gauri Torgalkar, Em Hatton and Patrick Hunter following consultation with members of the local community.

Martin Zaiter said the mural was one of the largest public artworks of its kind in Western Sydney and described it as a way to showcase the character of Harris Park.

He said the artwork highlighted the food, culture and community that people associate with the precinct while helping create a destination for both residents and visitors.

The mural is the first stage of a wider Harris Park Cultural Precinct project being delivered by the City of Parramatta with support from the Australian Government.

Future works are expected to include decorative lighting, street upgrades, new trees, garden beds, improved pavements, extra seating and a suspended gateway feature.

Dr Andrew Charlton said the project formed part of a $3.5 million federal investment in Harris Park and aimed to support local businesses while creating more welcoming public spaces.



The mural is the first stage of a wider Harris Park Cultural Precinct project being delivered by the City of Parramatta with support from the Australian Government



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John Lister MP, Member for Werribee, Joanne Ryan MP, Federal Member for Lalor, Dr Rabindra Nath Shaw join young performers during Boishakhi Mela 2026 at Werribee Indoor Sports Centre

Boishakhi Mela draws strong turnout in Melbourne's west

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Boishakhi Mela 2026 was held on 18 April at the Werribee Indoor Sports Centre, drawing strong attendance from families across Melbourne's west for a community celebration of the Bengali New Year.

The evening event, which ran from 4:30pm to 11pm, featured cultural performances, food stalls and market displays, with visitors taking part in competitions, live music and retail activities throughout the venue.

The celebration was organised by Bongosathi, which thanked the local community for its support.

"Thank you, Melbourne West, for your trust, love, and incredible support," organisers said following the event.

John Lister MP, Member for Werribee, Joanne Ryan MP, Federal Member for Lalor, Cr Jasmine Hill and Cr Pradeep Tiwari attended the event as guests. Organisers acknowledged their presence, stating, "A heartfelt thank you to our Federal and Victorian local MPs, Dy Mayor Wyndham City, Cr. Pradeep and other guests for coming and encouraging our community with your presence."

Boishakhi Mela marks the Bengali New Year, observed across Bangladesh and parts of India, particularly West Bengal. Community celebrations linked 〈TURN TO #19〉



❮CONTINUED FROM #18❯ to the occasion continue to draw interest across Melbourne, bringing together families, performers and small businesses.

This year's programme included a sit and draw competition, Bengali creative arts and kolka contests, and a trivia session focused on New Year traditions. The evening also featured a cultural showcase with music, dance and live performances, including a Bangla folk band.





Boish-akhi Mela marks the Bengali New Year, observed across Bangladesh and parts of India, particularly West Bengal

More than 25 food and market stalls operated across the venue, offering Bengali cuisine, fashion, jewellery and small business products. Events of this kind provide local vendors with a direct way to engage with customers while contributing to the overall experience.

Organisers said the atmosphere throughout the evening reflected strong community participation. "It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the celebration, the beautiful Bengali music, the vibrant atmosphere, and all the shopping and fun throughout the event," they said.

They added that the shared experience remained the highlight of the day. "Smiling faces, cultural pride, and community togetherness made these moments unforgettable," organisers said. "These memories belong to all of us. Thank you for being part of this journey and for making the event such a joyful success."

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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Cassandra Fernando receives a community honour during Ugadi celebrations hosted by Melbourne Kannada Sangha, alongside Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar and His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji. Photo/Facebook

Cassandra Fernando and Yaduveer Wadiyar meet Melbourne Kannada community

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Federal MP Cassandra Fernando joined members of the **Melbourne Kannada community for Ugadi celebrations** hosted by Melbourne Kannada Sangha, with the event bringing together community leaders, cultural figures and visiting dignitaries.

The gathering included the presence of His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji, whose visit drew strong interest from members of the Kannada community across Melbourne.

Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, Member of Parliament for Mysore Kodagu and titular Maharaja of Mysore, also attended the event and took part in a formal meeting with Ms Cassandra Fernando MP, alongside Mahaswamiji and a delegation from the Kannada Sangha.

The meeting focused on issues of mutual interest between the Indian and Australian communities, with participants discussing matters linked to cultural ties, community engagement 〈TURN TO #21〉

The meeting focused on issues of mutual interest between the Indian and Australian communities, with participants discussing matters linked to cultural ties, community engagement





CONTINUED FROM #20 and the role of diaspora organisations in strengthening connections between both countries.

Fernando said it was a pleasure to celebrate Ugadi with Melbourne Kannada Sangha and meet members of the local community.

"It was wonderful to meet His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji and connect with members of the Kannada community," she said.

Yaduveer Wadiyar thanked organisers for the welcome and acknowledged the efforts made to bring the community together.

"Thank you for the warm welcome and for bringing the community together," he said.

Community organisations such as Melbourne Kannada Sangha continue to play an active role in preserving language, cultural traditions and festivals for Kannada families living in Australia. Ugadi, which marks the New Year for many communities in southern India, often serves as an occasion for families and community groups to reconnect and celebrate shared heritage.

The presence of political representatives from both Australia and India added another layer to the event, reflecting the growing visibility of Indian Australian communities in public life.

Events like these have become increasingly common across Melbourne, where cultural associations regularly host celebrations that bring together elected representatives, spiritual leaders and local families. Organisers said the Ugadi event was designed to strengthen community bonds while creating space for discussion around issues affecting Kannada Australians.

The formal meeting between Fernando, Wadiyar, Mahaswamiji and Kannada Sangha representatives offered a chance to exchange views in a community setting, with participants describing the discussion as constructive and focused on shared interests.

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Young voices lead a devotional song at the Gurdwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Officer // Photos supplied

Officer community marks Vaisakhi and Khalsa Sajna Diwas

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

The Sikh community in Officer came together to mark **Vaisakhi** and **Khalsa Sajna Diwas**, commemorating a defining moment in Sikh history while reinforcing values of unity, service and equality.

Vaisakhi marks the formation of the Khalsa in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib, when Sikhs were called upon to rise above divisions of caste and status, and to live by the principles of courage, discipline and service. The adoption of the surnames Singh and Kaur was part of that moment, symbolising equality and shared identity.

At the Gurdwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Officer, the significance of the occasion was reflected not only in prayer and reflection, but in the coming together of the wider community.

The celebrations which took place from April 14 to 19 drew a strong turnout of worshippers, visitors and community members, along with elected representatives and leaders from across Victoria.

Local government representatives, community organisations, Victoria Police and sporting groups were also present, reflecting the broad cross-section of the community 〈TURN TO #23〉







The presence of guests from different backgrounds highlighted the multicultural fabric of the region

CONTINUED FROM #22 that joined the celebrations.

Organisers said the gathering was as much about community connection as it was about cultural and spiritual observance.

"This occasion reminds us that true strength lies in humility, compassion and standing up for others," said Harpreet Singh Kandra, community leader, adding, "Sikhism, one of the youngest monotheistic faiths, is grounded in the principles of equality, service, and prosperity for all. This occasion holds great spiritual and cultural significance for our community."

Volunteers played a key role throughout the celebrations, with the spirit of seva, or selfless service, evident in the organisation of the event and the sharing of food with all attendees.

Community members said the presence of guests from different backgrounds highlighted the multicultural fabric of the region and the role such events play in building understanding and respect.

The celebration concluded with a message of gratitude to those who attended and supported the event, and with well wishes for a joyful Vaisakhi and Khalsa Sajna Diwas.

Among those in attendance were Cardinia Shire councillor Samantha Potter, Senator Lisa Darmanin, Victorian Multicultural Commission commissioners Viv Nguyen and Sylvia Coombe, and Members of Parliament including Michael Galea, Lee Tarlamis, Pauline Richards and Gary Maas.





Shruthi Ashwathappa

The woman who wants every girl to find her voice

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

There is a particular kind of woman who arrives at a pageant stage not because she has always dreamed of it, but because she has run out of smaller platforms. **Shruthi Ashwathappa** is that woman. An IT consultant who spends her working days in the measured logic of systems and code, she did not grow up imagining a crown. She grew up watching talented girls go quiet.

"Growing up, I saw so many talented girls hold themselves back—not because they lacked ability, but because they lacked confidence, support, or a safe space to express themselves," she says. "That really stayed with me."

Ashwathappa is originally from Bangalore and completed her Master's in Information Technology at Swinburne University of Technology before settling into a consulting career in Melbourne. On paper, it is a tidy story of migration and professional ambition. In practice, her life has been considerably more layered. Alongside her IT work, she mentors early-career graduates, trains in yoga and fitness through Aswath International Academy in Bangalore, represents Victoria in the traditional Indian team sport Kho Kho, and advocates for youth mental health through the organisation batyr. She is also, as of this year, a national finalist in the Australia Galaxy Pageants, representing Victoria on the national stage.

She entered the competition on a whim, she says—out of curiosity. But curiosity, for Ashwathappa, tends to become conviction. "My pageant journey began with curiosity and quickly became aligned with what I wanted to achieve—using this platform to empower others and make a meaningful impact." The frivolous version of this story did not last long.

Much of what drives her can be traced to her late father, whose dedication to supporting underprivileged children in education left a deep impression. It is a thread that runs quietly through everything she does—the belief that opportunities, when they exist, carry an obligation. "Representing Victoria is an honour," she says. "It means showcasing the state's diversity and values on a national stage, while using this platform to inspire and make a positive impact."

The initiative she has built around that conviction is called Project VoiceOut. Founded by Ashwathappa herself, it is focused 〈TURN TO #25〉

> Growing up, I saw so many talented girls hold themselves back—not because they lacked ability, but because they lacked confidence, support, or a safe space to express themselves

SHRUTHI ASHWATHAPPA

<CONTINUED FROM #24> on helping young girls and women find what she describes, simply and without flourish, as their voice. "Through this project, I aim to create platforms—whether through workshops, mentorship, or community engagement—where young women can speak up, share their stories, and realise their full potential." The emphasis, she is careful to say, is on action rather than abstraction. "It's not just about empowerment as a concept. It's about helping one girl at a time believe in herself enough to create change—not just in her own life, but in her community."

The work is early. Ashwathappa is candid about that. She has led online meditation sessions focused on self-love and self-expression in collaboration with Aswath International Academy, and conducted a yoga session for around fifteen women through Kritha for Women—a session she describes as creating "a safe space for connection and growth." She has run a 5K to encourage women in her circle to step outside their comfort zones. The numbers are modest for now, but the shape of something larger is visible in her plans.

Mental health sits close to the centre of it all. Ashwathappa supports batyr, an Australian organisation that works to shift the way young people think and talk about mental health. Her involvement is primarily through advocacy—using her platform to normalise the conversation, particularly among young people who, as she puts it, "silently struggle." "I believe early support, open dialogue, and breaking stigma can truly change lives," she says. "Through my platform, I want to empower young people to prioritise their mental wellbeing and feel confident asking for help."

Sport, unexpectedly, has been one of the more grounding parts of this journey. Kho Kho—a fast-paced tag sport with roots in ancient India—is not widely known in Australia, and that, for Ashwathappa, is part of the point. "It's about bringing a traditional Indian game to Australia and creating cultural awareness," she says. "It has given me a strong sense of purpose and confidence, knowing I'm contributing to something bigger than myself."

There is something characteristic in the way she describes it: the sport as both personal and communal, a means of being seen while also making space for something broader.

Her cultural background, she says, has been less a constraint than a lens. Growing up between Indian tradition and the particular textures of Australian life has given her, in her words, "a unique perspective—blending tradition with modern values." Her roots, she insists, are not background noise. "My culture isn't just a background—it's my strength, my story, and the driving force behind everything I do."

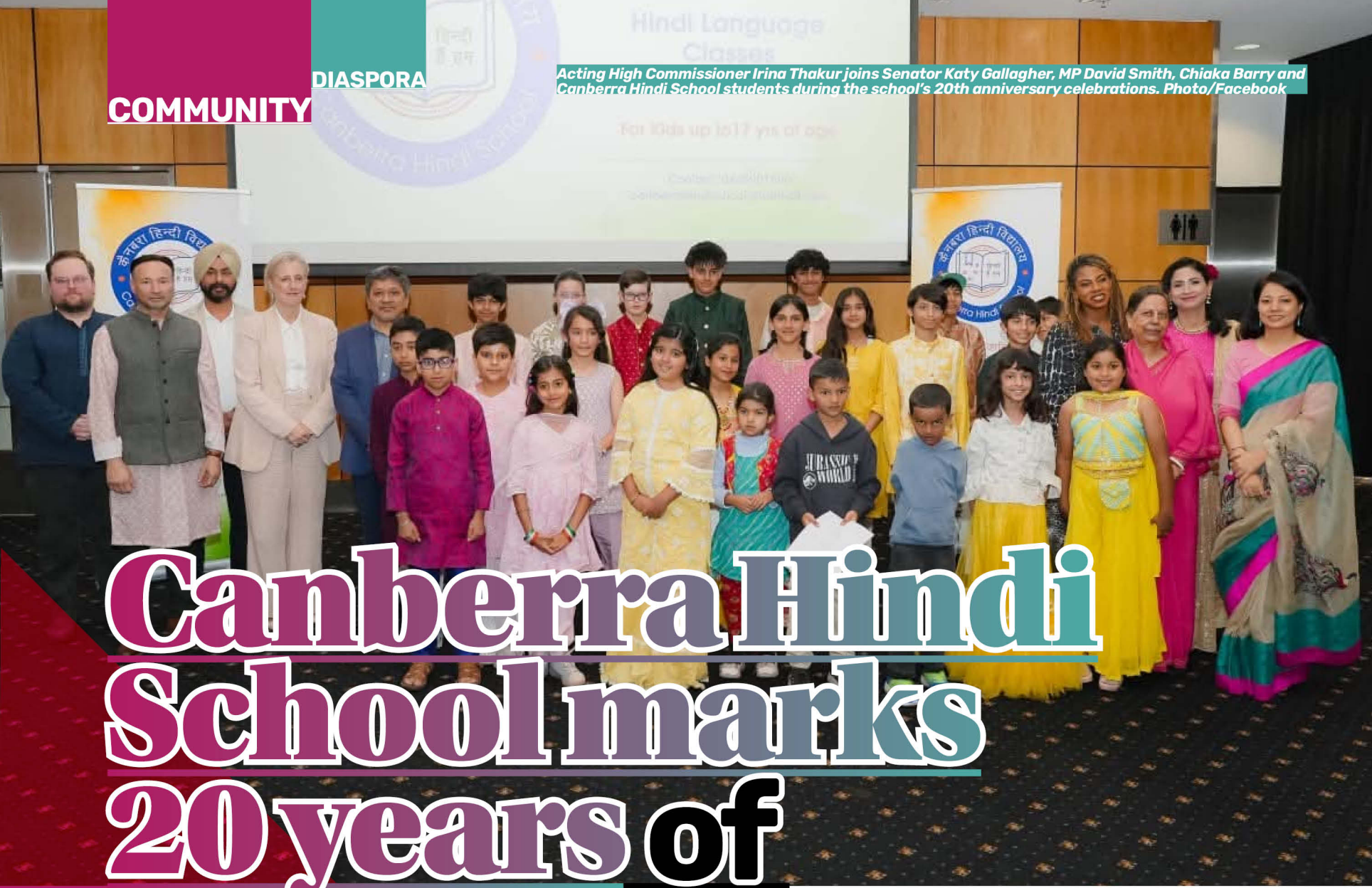
The challenges have been real. Ashwathappa is measured when she talks about them, but direct. Much of the journey has been navigated independently—the preparation, the initiative, the financial demands of competitive pageantry. Sponsorship, she notes, has been difficult to secure. "Genuine support is rare," she says. What has kept her moving is something less dramatic than triumph: resilience, she says, and clarity of purpose. "Every challenge has made me stronger, more independent, and even more committed to creating meaningful impact."

For the young women she hopes Project VoiceOut will reach, her message has the quality of something hard-won rather than rehearsed. "Your voice, your story, and your uniqueness matter," she says. "Confidence isn't about being perfect—it's about being unapologetically you."

If she wins the national title, she intends to grow the project into a formal organisation. She also wants to support the expansion of Aswath International Academy into a global platform—a space where students across countries can learn, showcase their talents, and engage with both cultural and educational exchange. The ambitions are large. But then, she has never seemed particularly interested in small ones.

What she wants, at its simplest, is the thing she did not always see growing up: a room where girls feel certain that what they have to say is worth saying. She is building it, one session at a time.





Acting High Commissioner Irina Thakur joins Senator Katy Gallagher, MP David Smith, Chiaka Barry and Canberra Hindi School students during the school's 20th anniversary celebrations. Photo/Facebook

Canberra Hindi School marks 20 years of language and community

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Canberra Hindi School has marked its 20th anniversary with a celebration attended by diplomats, politicians and community leaders, highlighting the role the school has played in promoting Hindi language and Indian culture in Australia.

The event was attended by Acting High Commissioner Irina Thakur, who joined the celebrations recognising the school's contribution to strengthening ties between India and Australia through language, education and cultural connection.

Founded as a community-led initiative, Canberra Hindi School has spent the past two decades helping children and families learn Hindi while staying connected to cultural traditions. The school has become an important part of community life for many Indian-Australian families in Canberra, offering classes, events and celebrations that bring people together.



Guests gather during Canberra Hindi School's 20th anniversary celebrations in Canberra

Among those attending the anniversary celebrations were Minister of Finance Senator Katy Gallagher, Federal Member of Parliament David Smith, the Ambassador of Nepal, ACT Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs Chiaka Barry, members of the Indian diaspora and other dignitaries.

Speakers at the event reflected on the importance of language schools in multicultural Australia. For many families, schools like Canberra Hindi School provide children with an opportunity to learn the language of their parents and grandparents while building a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

The event also highlighted the broader relationship between India and Australia, which continues to expand across education, trade, migration and community engagement. Hindi language schools have become part of that relationship by creating everyday connections between cultures and helping younger generations remain linked to their heritage.

Guests also recognised the teachers, volunteers and families who have supported Canberra Hindi School over the past 20 years, with cultural performances and community activities forming part of the celebrations.

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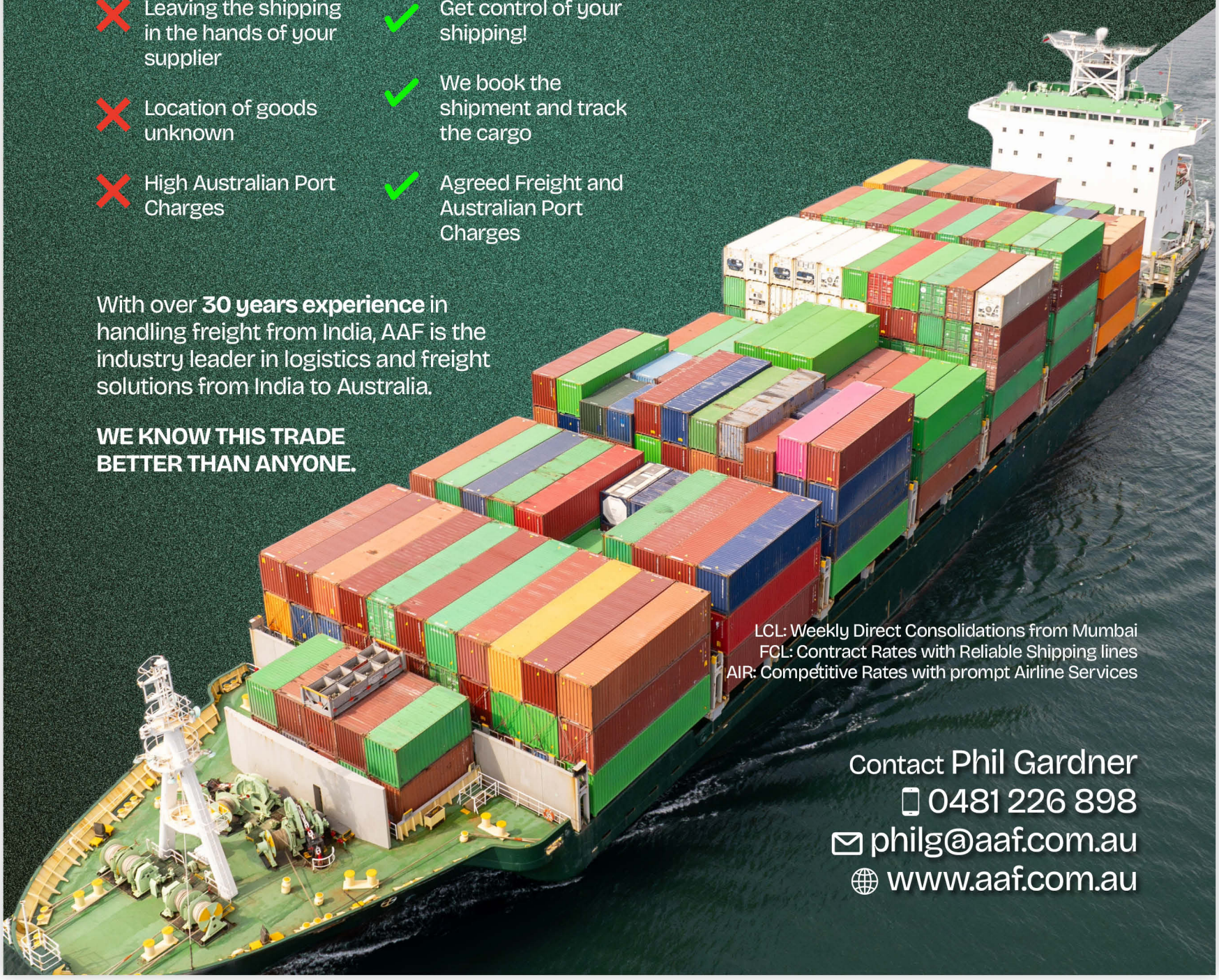
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MKC lunch brings a taste of home to Melbourne students



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A community gathering in Melbourne has offered international students a familiar sense of comfort, with food, faith and shared experience shaping an afternoon centred on connection.

The **Melbourne Konkan Community** hosted its latest Students' Lunch on 19 April at St Joseph's Catholic Church Hall, welcoming Mangalorean Catholic students from across the city. Many attendees are studying far from home, and the event aimed to provide a setting where they could reconnect with cultural traditions and meet others in similar situations.

The gathering began with a blessing led by Aqin Lindon Noronha, adding a spiritual element that organisers say remains central to the group's activities. For participants, the moment set a reflective tone before the focus shifted to food and conversation.

Organisers chose to prepare the meal themselves rather than outsource catering, with committee members cooking a traditional Mangalorean spread. Dishes included kori rotti, sannas, pomfret curry, chana tendli and vorn, reflecting flavours familiar to many of the students. The decision to serve home-cooked food was deliberate, with organisers aiming to recreate the experience of a family meal rather than a formal event.

Students spent the afternoon sharing stories, taking part in games and forming new connections. For many, it was an opportunity to step away from the routines of study and part-time work, and to spend time in a setting shaped by shared background and language.

Events like this have become a regular feature of the community's calendar. Alongside the Students' Lunch, the group also runs initiatives during major holidays, including Christmas Day

❮TURN TO #29❯







❮CONTINUED FROM #28❯

gatherings where local families host students who might otherwise spend the day alone. Organisers say these efforts are designed to provide practical and emotional support, particularly during periods that can heighten feelings of distance from home.

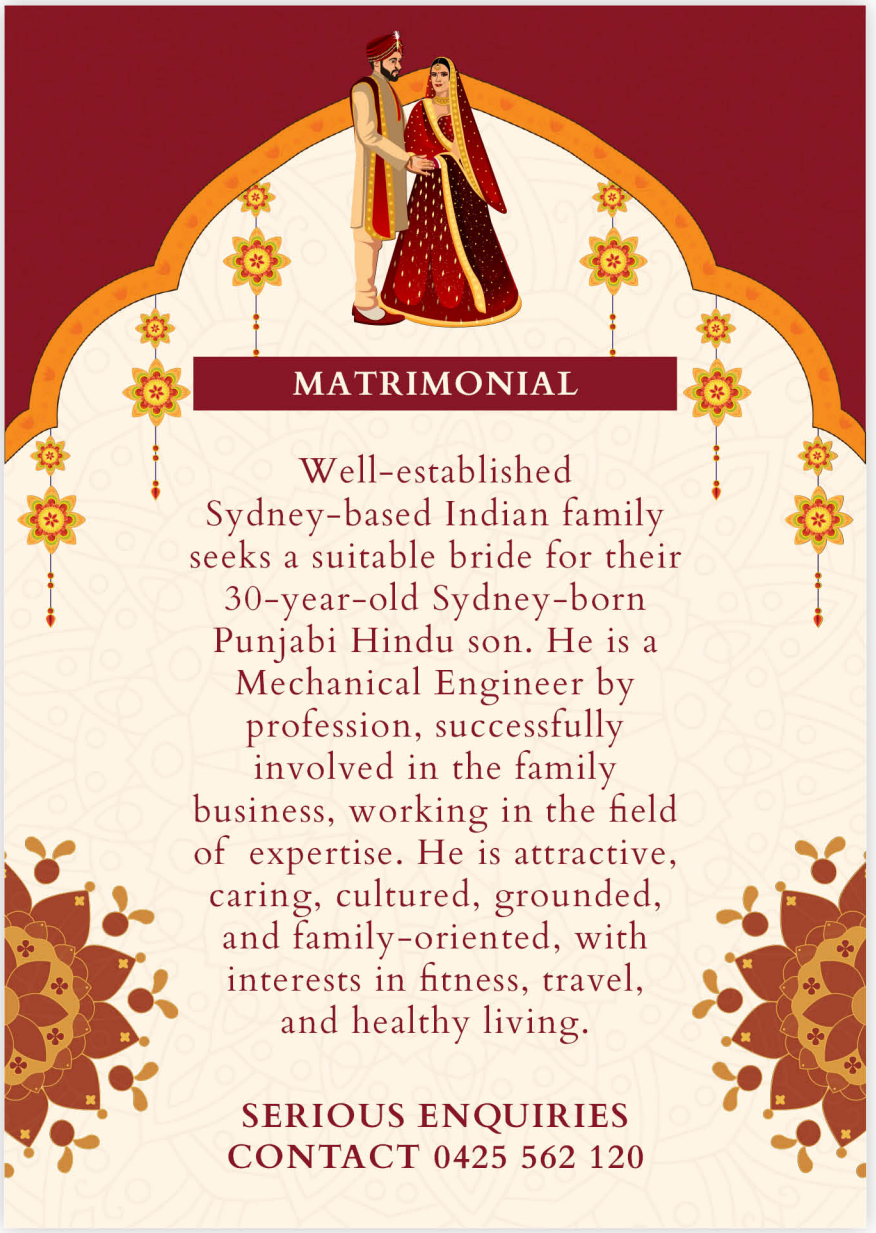
The broader context reflects the experience of many international students in Australia, where adjusting to a new environment can involve balancing academic demands with social isolation. Community-led programmes often fill gaps that formal institutions do not always address, offering informal networks of support.

The Melbourne Konkan Community operates through volunteers, with members contributing time and resources to organise events and maintain connections across generations. Its work centres on cultural continuity as well as community care, with activities that bring together younger students and established families.

Many int'l students in Australia balance academic demands with social isolation while adjusting to a new environment

While such gatherings may appear small in scale, their impact is often measured in less tangible ways. For students attending the lunch, the value lay in familiarity, shared identity and the chance to feel part of a wider network.

As the event came to an end, many left with takeaway food, but organisers say the more lasting outcome is the sense of belonging created during the afternoon. In a city where many are building new lives, that connection can carry weight well beyond a single meal.





Australian Tamil Sangam // Photo supplied

ACT calls for nominations as Youth Week spotlights young changemakers

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Canberra is encouraging nominations for the **ACT Women's Awards** during ACT Youth Week, with past recipients highlighted to show the impact young people are making across the community.

Among them is Anjali Sharma, who was previously named ACT Young Woman of the Year after helping drive national climate change protests as a teenager and contributing to policy discussions, including the Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Equity) Bill.

"While awards are never the purpose of activism, it's a sign that what we're doing is working which is an honour and a privilege," Sharma said.

> While awards are never the purpose of activism, it's a sign that what we're doing is working which is an honour and a privilege
>
> **ANJALI SHARMA**

The ACT Women's Awards recognise women, gender-diverse and non-binary people across the region whose work is creating lasting and positive change. The program spans fields including science, sport, community work and culture, with recipients acknowledged for contributions at local, national and global levels.

The ACT Women's Honour Roll continues to record those contributions, listing award recipients since self-government in 1988 across categories such as ACT Women's Awards, ACT Australian of the Year Awards and Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards.

Recent award cycles have recognised a broad group of contributors. Lauren Cannell was named ACT Woman of the Year, while Jayanti Gupta received ACT Senior Woman of the Year. Megan Gilmour was recognised as ACT Australian of the Year, with Vanessa Brettell and Hannah Costello named ACT Local Heroes.

Officials say nominations are open to women, gender-diverse and non-binary people from all backgrounds and life experiences, with individuals able to nominate themselves or others.

The next ACT Women's Awards ceremony is scheduled for 3 September 2026, when new recipients and Honour Roll inductees will be announced. Organisers say ACT Youth Week provides an opportunity to recognise emerging leaders and encourage wider community participation in the nomination process.

For more information, visit ***act.gov.au***

"Nama Mahima" discourse inspires Brisbane community

NICK ATTAM
𝕏 **@the_indian_sun**



The Brisbane Indian community experienced an enriching spiritual gathering as **Samavedham Shanmukha Sarma** delivered discourses on the significance of **"Nama Mahima"** over two days, held on the 12th and 13th.

Sarma is a well-known Indian spiritual teacher, scholar and orator recognised for his discourses on Hindu scriptures, including the Puranas, Vedas and Itihasas. He serves as the editor of Rushipeetham magazine, is a devotional lyricist associated with Sivapadam, and founded the Rushividyabhyasam initiative, which focuses on preserving and promoting Indian cultural and spiritual traditions. More information about his work can be found at Rushipeetham.

> Through story-telling, scriptural references and practical reflections, Sarma highlighted how Nama Smarana can support a sense of calm, clarity and spiritual focus





The event drew a large and engaged audience, with attendees responding warmly to the pravachanams that explored the value of chanting the divine name in daily life. Through storytelling, scriptural references and practical reflections, Sarma highlighted how Nama Smarana can support a sense of calm, clarity and spiritual focus.

The programme was organised by Challa Prasad and coordinated by Sree Krishna Venuthurupalli along with Suresh Ajjarapu. Their efforts helped ensure the event ran smoothly and created a welcoming setting for participants.

Across both days, families, young people and older attendees took part, reflecting steady interest in spiritual learning within the local community. The sessions connected traditional teachings with present-day concerns, which appeared to resonate with younger attendees looking for balance in a busy routine.

The programme closed with a shared meal, giving participants time to reflect and connect. Organisers thanked the community for its support and participation, noting the strong turnout and engagement across both days.

More info: ***rushipeetham.com***

From bedside care to Ben & Jerry's: Jai Singh's sweet new chapter

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

When **Jai Singh** arrived in Australia from Amritsar in 2019, he had $2,000 in his bank account and no connections—just a spot in Western Sydney University's Bachelor of Nursing program.

Six years later, the 25-year-old Indian immigrant is preparing to open what he says is South Australia's first independent **Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop**, at Shop 3, 62 Hindley Street, Adelaide. He is also one of the youngest Ben & Jerry's owners in Australia.

"I can't believe it," he says. "I think I can bring a young touch to the brand."

Before ice cream, there was nursing.

After completing his degree, Singh moved to rural South Australia when an opportunity came up in Murray Bridge. "I said, why not?". He fell in love with the small-town rhythm of quiet streets, familiar faces, and the easy warmth of strangers. He never went back to Sydney.

For three years, he worked in aged care and palliative care, often sitting with people in their final days and supporting their families. "Almost every person I met had regrets," he says. "Not a single person said, 'I fulfilled everything in my life.' I didn't want to become that person."

The work was meaningful, but emotionally heavy. "When the first person died in front of me, I cried more than the family," he says. "I was like, this is so painful."

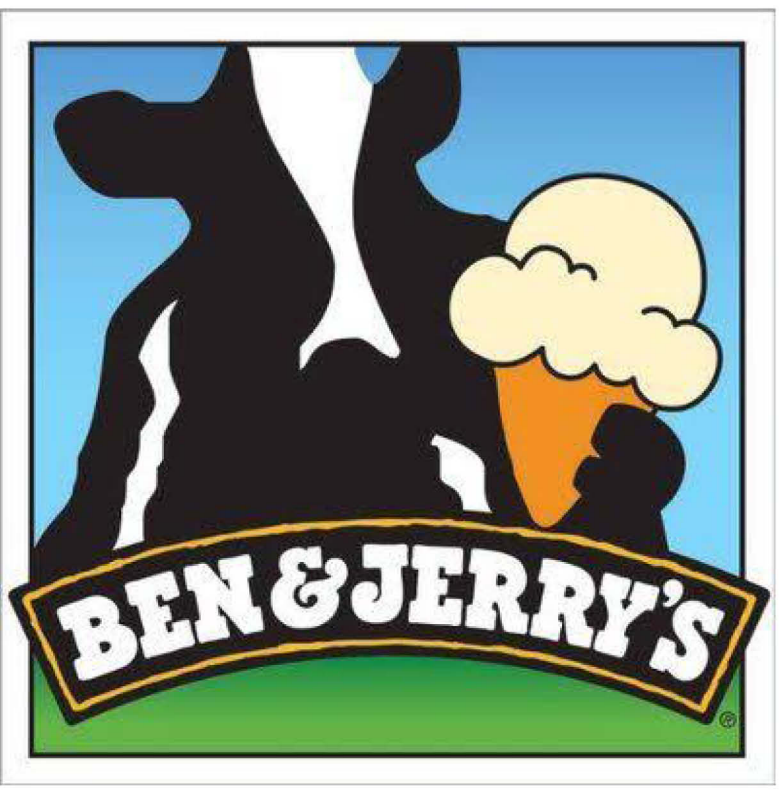
He also witnessed deep loneliness. "You won't believe how many people die without anyone around them. Sometimes I was the only one there."

The turning point came during a night shift in Wallaroo. A planned blackout left the small rural town in darkness, and Singh stepped outside under a sky full of stars. "I suddenly thought you love what you do, but do you want to do this for your whole life?"

He thought of his childhood in Punjab, where weekend ice cream trips were small but memorable family rituals. "I have such an emotional connection with ice cream. I wanted to create that same feeling for people."

That thought led him to Ben & Jerry's. As he googled more about the brand with its focus on social causes, human rights and ethical sourcing, it struck a chord. **<TURN TO #35>**





> I have such an emotional connection with ice cream. I wanted to create that same feeling for people. (Ben & Jerry's) aligned with me
>
> **JAI SINGH**


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CONTINUED FROM #33 "It aligned with me. They sell ice cream, but they also care about people."

The leap, however, was far from easy. His parents were worried. "You are 22," they told him. "You don't know anything. How will you do this?"

By then, Singh had saved about $100,000 through years of long shifts and careful spending. But the total cost of the franchise ran into several hundred thousand dollars, which meant taking on a bank loan.

"In Indian families, taking on that kind of debt is scary," he says. "But sometimes you have to take that risk to build something."

He went through multiple rounds of interviews, with the final one conducted by the CEO of Ben & Jerry's Australia and New Zealand.

"He said, 'Jai, you look like a good fit.'"

Singh left nursing about six weeks ago to focus entirely on the business. He has hired 12 staff from diverse backgrounds and wants the shop to feel less like a workplace and more like a shared space.

Opening day is set for Monday, 5 May, from 12pm to 8pm, with unlimited free scoops to mark Ben & Jerry's Free Cone Day.

The choice of Hindley Street is deliberate. Known for its nightlife and, more recently, its decline, it is not the obvious location for a family-friendly ice cream shop.

"People say it's dying off," Singh says. "I think Ben & Jerry's can bring some life back."

It is a gamble—one he is fully aware of.

> In Indian families, taking on that kind of debt is scary. But sometimes you have to take that risk to build something

"I am putting my whole life savings into this. It can go either way. But I'll make it work."

Nursing, he insists, will always remain a part of him. "I can never separate myself from it."

But for now, he is choosing to act on what he learned at the bedside—not to wait.

"If I can do it, anyone can do it," he says. "If you come to a country and don't know anyone, you can still build something."





Indians become Australia's largest overseas-born group, ABS data shows

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

People born in India have become the largest overseas-born population in Australia for the first time, narrowly overtaking those born in England, according to figures released on 29 April by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

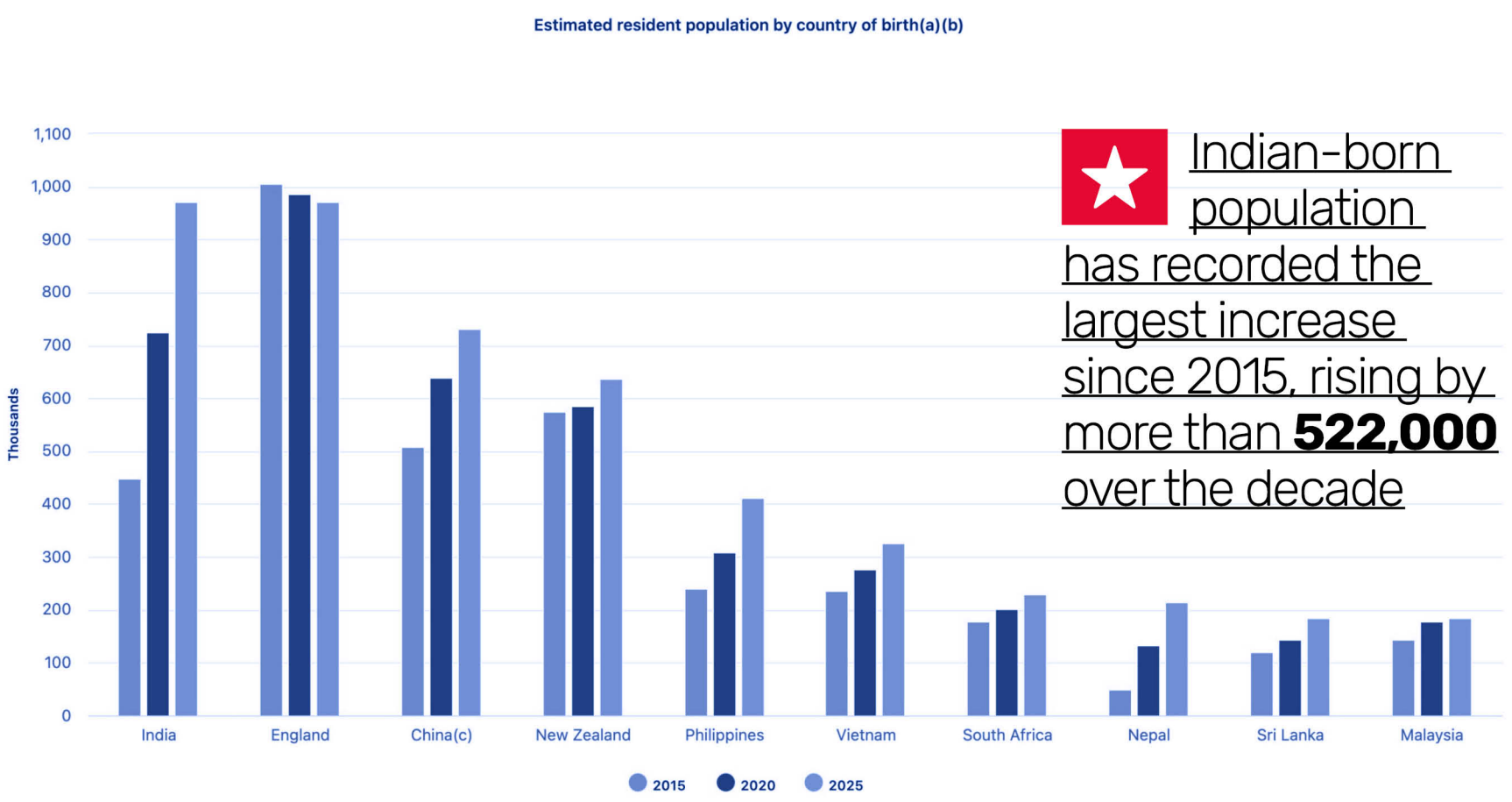
The ABS estimates 971,020 Indian-born residents were living in Australia as at 30 June 2025, compared with 970,950 people born in England.

A year earlier, England retained a clear lead, with 963,560 residents compared with 916,330 Indian-born people. The shift reflects sustained growth in migration from India alongside a gradual decline in the number of England-born residents.

The data shows the Indian-born population has recorded the largest increase since 2015, rising by more than 522,000 over the decade. By contrast, the number of people born in England has fallen over the same period, down by around 36,000.

ABS historical records indicate England had **TURN TO #37**

The ABS said populations born in Italy and England have recorded the **largest declines** since 2015, with both groups now having median ages above 60



Indian-born population has recorded the largest increase since 2015, rising by more than **522,000** over the decade

a. Population estimates for 2025 are preliminary. See Revision status in the methodology page.
b. Top 10 countries of birth for Australia's estimated resident population as at 30 June 2025 (excludes Australia).
c. Excludes SARs and Taiwan.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia's population by country of birth Jun 2025

《CONTINUED FROM #36》
consistently been the largest overseas-born group in Australia since at least 1901. That pattern has now changed, with India taking the top position after several years of steady growth.

China remains the third largest overseas-born group, with an estimated 731,540 residents, followed by New Zealand at 637,680. Other large migrant communities include those from the Philippines, Vietnam, South Africa, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Australia's total population was estimated at 27.6 million in mid-2025, including 18.8 million people born in the country and 8.8 million born overseas. Overseas-born residents accounted for about 32 per cent of the population, approaching the historical peak of 32.4 per cent recorded in 1891.

Over the past two decades, the overseas-born population has grown at an average annual rate of 3.0 per cent, compared with 1.0 per cent for those born in Australia. This faster growth has driven the rising share of migrants in the overall population.

"The median age of those born overseas has fluctuated over time, peaking at a median of 46 years in 2002 and decreasing to 44 years in 2019," the ABS said in its release on Wednesday.

"In 2021, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the decrease in younger people (such as international students) migrating to Australia, the median age of the overseas-born population increased to 45 years."



Representational Photo by Mitchell Luo on Unsplash

China remains the third largest overseas-born group, with an estimated 731,540 residents, followed by New Zealand at 637,680. Other large migrant communities include those from the Philippines, Vietnam, South Africa, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Malaysia

By 2025, the median age for overseas-born residents stood at 43, slightly lower than 46 in 2005. The median age for Australian-born residents was 35, up from 33 two decades earlier.

The ABS said populations born in Italy and England have recorded the largest declines since 2015, with both groups now having median ages above 60. This reflects post-war migration patterns, when large numbers arrived from Europe and have since aged.

Migration trends shifted during the pandemic, when travel restrictions reduced overseas arrivals and temporarily lowered the share of migrants in the population. Since restrictions eased in 2022, migration levels have increased again, pushing the overseas-born share back above 30 per cent.

Australia ranks eighth globally for the number of overseas-born residents. The United States remains the largest host country, with 52.4 million migrants making up 15 per cent of its population. Germany follows with 16.8 million migrants, or 19.8 per cent of its population, while Saudi Arabia ranks third with 13.7 million migrants, accounting for 31.5 per cent.

New Zealand-born residents remain the fourth largest overseas-born group in Australia, representing 2.3 per cent of the population.



Evan Mulholland attends the Australian Sikh Games 2026 in Melbourne, celebrating strong community spirit and a well-run event by organisers. Photo/Facebook

Sikh Games draw 100,000 as Melbourne hosts 38th edition

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

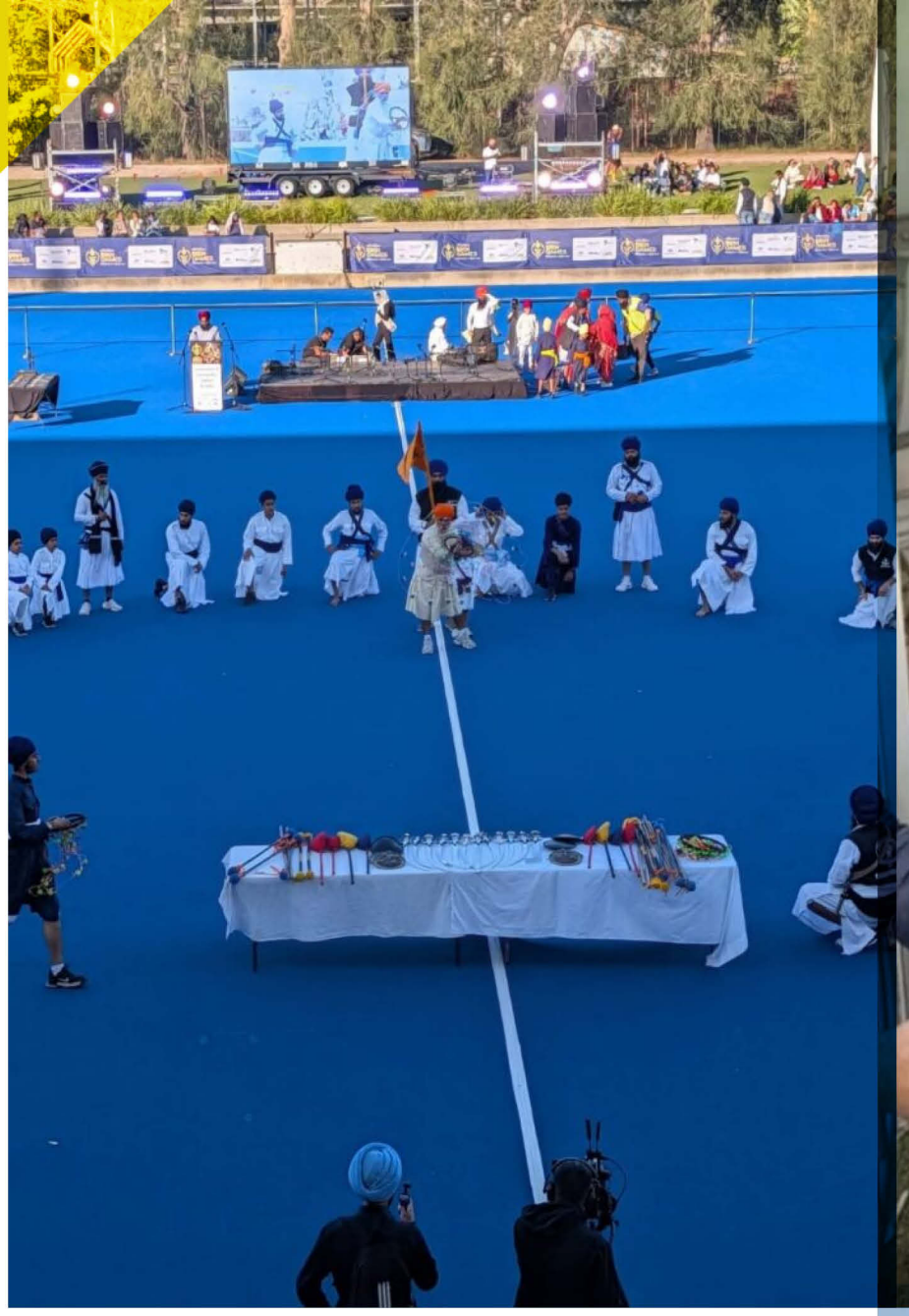
Melbourne hosted the **38th Australian Sikh Games** earlier this month, drawing large crowds and reinforcing the event's place as one of the country's biggest community-led sporting gatherings.

Held from 3 to 5 April in Parkville, the Games brought together more than 8,000 athletes and performers competing across 15 sports and cultural activities. Organisers estimate that over 100,000 people attended across the three days, with participation from around 120 not-for-profit sporting and cultural clubs.

Athletes and spectators travelled from **<TURN TO #39>**



Among those attending were Liberal figures including Jess Wilson, Evan Mulholland and Matthew Guy, who joined participants and spectators





CONTINUED FROM #38 across Australia and overseas, including New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada and the United Kingdom, reflecting the event's expanding reach.

Crowds turned out in force throughout the programme, which combined competitive fixtures with cultural showcases. Kabaddi remained a major draw, alongside athletics and team sports, while music, food and performances added to a festival-like atmosphere around the venues.

Among those attending were Liberal figures including Jess Wilson, Evan Mulholland and Matthew Guy, who joined participants and spectators during the event.

Organisers, led by committee member Jag Chugha, were credited with delivering a well-coordinated programme despite the scale of the event. Volunteers played a central role, supporting logistics, scheduling, safety and venue operations across multiple sites.

The Australian Sikh Games, first held in 1988, rotate between major cities and regional centres each year. They have grown steadily in scale, evolving into a national platform that blends sport with cultural connection and community engagement.

Kabaddi remained a major draw, alongside athletics and team sports, with food, music

That growth mirrors broader demographic trends. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows Sikhism is among the fastest-growing religions in the country, with more than 210,000 people identifying as Sikh in the 2021 Census, up from around 125,000 in 2016. Victoria accounts for a significant share, with Melbourne now a key centre for Sikh community life.

Organisers say interest in future editions remains strong, with plans to build on participation levels while maintaining the volunteer-driven structure that underpins the Games.





पारिवारिक और घरेलू हिंसा के दीर्घकालिक असर को उजागर करने के लिए कैंडललाइट विजिल

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Safe Steps ने वक्टिोरयिा के लोगों से अपील की है कि वे 6 मई को आयोजति उसकी वार्षकि कैंडललाइट वजिलि में शामलि होकर पारविारकि और घरेलू हसिा से प्रभावति परविारों के प्रति अपना समर्थन जताएँ।

यह विजिल स्मरण के लिए आयोजित की जाती है, लेकिन इस वर्ष इसका ध्यान पारिवारिक हिंसा के उन अक्सर अनदेखे, दूरगामी प्रभावों पर है जो बच्चों, युवाओं और परिवारों पर लंबे समय तक असर डालते हैं। Safe Steps उन लोगों के अनुभवों पर रोशनी डाल रहा है जो संकट के बाद भी इसके प्रभावों के साथ जी रहे हैं, ताकि इसके व्यापक असर को बेहतर समझा जा सके और इस पर गंभीर चर्चा हो।

2025 में ऑस्ट्रेलिया में 77 महिलाओं और 26 बच्चों की हत्या उनके माता-पिता या अंतरंग साथियों द्वारा की गई (The Red Heart Campaign)। 2026 में अब तक 14 महिलाओं, तीन बच्चों और एक अजन्मे शिशु की मौत घरेलू या संबंधित हिंसा के कारण हो चुकी है (Australian Femicide Watch)।

युवाओं के संदर्भ में, हर 8 में से 1 व्यक्ति ने 15 वर्ष की उम्र से पहले अपने किसी अभिभावक के खिलाफ हिंसा देखी है (Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission), और ऐसे अनुभव जीवन भर के परिणामों को प्रभावित कर सकते हैं। इसके अलावा, बड़े किशोरों में से एक-तिहाई ने अंतरंग साथी हिंसा का अनुभव किया है, जबकि लगभग 39% यौन उत्पीड़न के पीड़ित 10 से 17 वर्ष के बीच के हैं (Australian Institute of Family Studies; Australian Bureau of Statistics)। गहरी समझ के अभाव में, पारिवारिक हिंसा और आघात के प्रभाव अक्सर अनदेखे रह जाते हैं।

2025 में Safe 〈TURN TO #41〉



CONTINUED FROM #40

Steps को हिंदी में 8 और पंजाबी में 9 सहायता अनुरोध प्राप्त हुए, और 40 विभिन्न भाषाओं में अनुवाद सहायता प्रदान की गई।

उसी अवधि में लगभग 154 पीड़ित-उत्तरजीवियों को दुभाषिया सेवाओं की आवश्यकता पड़ी। आपातकालीन आवास (मोटल) में, सांस्कृतिक और भाषाई रुप से विविध पृष्ठभूमि (CALD) के लोग लगातार लगभग 25 प्रतिशत रहे।

हर आंकड़ा उन परिवारों और समुदायों का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है जिनका जीवन स्थायी रुप से बदल गया है। ये प्रभाव अक्सर बच्चों के साथ वयस्कता तक चलते हैं, लेकिन पूरी तरह दर्ज नहीं हो पाते।





Payal Tiwari

Safe Steps की ग्रुप डायरेक्टर Suzanne Paynter ने कहा कि पारिवारिक हिंसा घर छोड़ने के बाद खत्म नहीं होती।

"अक्सर बातचीत तत्काल संकट पर केंद्रित होती है, लेकिन पारिवारिक हिंसा के दीर्घकालिक और पीढ़ीगत प्रभाव को कम समझा जाता है, खासकर उन बच्चों के लिए जो हिंसा, बेघरपन, बाधित शिक्षा, मानसिक आघात और अस्थिरता का सामना करते हैं।"

समर्थन की मांग लगातार बढ़ रही है। Safe Steps ने कॉल में साल-दर-साल 17% की वृद्धि दर्ज की है और वित्तीय वर्ष 2025 में फोन, ईमेल और लाइव चैट के माध्यम से लगभग 1,30,000 संपर्कों का जवाब दिया, साथ ही अदालत सहायता में 83% की वृद्धि देखी गई।

Suzanne Paynter ने कहा, "घरेलू और पारिवारिक हिंसा की व्यापकता के बावजूद, ऐसे बच्चों और युवाओं के लिए अभी भी पर्याप्त समर्थन की कमी है जो इसके बीच बड़े होते हैं।"

"इसके व्यापक और अक्सर अनदेखे प्रभाव होते हैं। यह पीढ़ियों तक जारी रहता है और बच्चों और परिवारों पर गहरा असर डालता है।"

"युवाओं के लिए समर्थन की कमी उन्हें बेघरपन और न्याय प्रणाली में फंसने के अधिक जोखिम में डाल सकती है।"

"किशोरों में आघात से जुड़ा व्यवहार अक्सर 'acting out' समझकर नजरअंदाज कर दिया जाता है, जबकि इसके पीछे की असली वजह पर ध्यान नहीं दिया जाता। घर से भागना या आपराधिक न्याय प्रणाली में पहुंचना अक्सर घर के भीतर की समस्याओं को छिपा देता है। गहरी समझ के बिना, पारिवारिक हिंसा और आघात के प्रभाव अनदेखे रह जाते हैं।"

Safe Steps की रणनीतिक सलाहकार Payal Tiwari इस संगठन के साथ मिलकर जागरुकता बढ़ाने और पीड़ित-उत्तरजीवियों तथा उनके परिवारों को सहायता लेने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर रही हैं।

एक वरिष्ठ टेक्नोलॉजी और परिवर्तन विशेषज्ञ के रुप में, Payal अब अपने अनुभव का उपयोग बदलाव के लिए कर रही हैं और नीति तथा सेवा सुधार में योगदान दे रही हैं।

"मेरे मामले में, मैं एक नेशनल डायरेक्टर थी, वित्त को समझती थी और एक बिज़नेस यूनिट संभाल रही थी। और फिर भी... घर में हिंसा हो रही थी और मुझे नहीं पता था कि कैसे निकलूं," Payal ने कहा।

"जब मैंने घर छोड़ा, तब भी यह आसान नहीं था। मेरे पास घर था, लेकिन सुरक्षा कारणों से जज ने मुझे वहां रहने की अनुमति नहीं दी। मुझे जाना पड़ा।"

"और 1800RESPECT पर कॉल करने के बाद मुझे Safe Steps से जोड़ा गया। मैंने पहले उनके बारे में सुना भी नहीं था। लेकिन जब मुझे सबसे ज्यादा जरुरत थी, उन्होंने साथ दिया। मेरा बेटा और मैंने लगभग एक महीना संकट आवास में बिताया।"

Payal का अनुभव यह दिखाता है कि घर छोड़ना कहानी का अंत नहीं होता।

"पारिवारिक हिंसा तब खत्म नहीं होती जब आप निकल जाते हैं। मेरे मामले में, इसका मतलब था वर्षों तक कानूनी प्रक्रिया में रहना, 20 से अधिक अदालत सुनवाई। यह थकाने वाला और लगातार चलने वाला अनुभव था। मुझे आर्थिक, मानसिक और शारीरिक रुप से फिर से शुरुआत करनी पड़ी," उन्होंने कहा।

समय के साथ यह अनुभव एक नई दिशा में बदल गया।

"क्योंकि घर छोड़ना अंत नहीं है। यह जीवन को फिर से बनाने की शुरुआत है। जो शुरुआत में सिर्फ बचाव होता है, वह आगे चलकर बेहतर जीवन में बदल सकता है। उस बीच की अवस्था को मैं 'थ्राइवल' कहती हूं।"

"अगर हमें बदलाव चाहिए, तो हमें तीन चीजों पर ध्यान देना होगा: रोकथाम, संकट सहायता और पुनर्वास।"

उनका अनुभव यह भी बताता है कि यह समस्या किसी एक वर्ग तक सीमित नहीं है।

"मेरे पास सुविधाएं थीं। मैं अंग्रेजी बोलती हूं। मैं शिक्षित हूं। मेरे पास टेक करियर था। फिर भी जाना मुश्किल था। तो सोचिए उन लोगों के लिए जिनके पास ये सब नहीं है," Payal ने कहा।

"ताकत संकट से ही पैदा हो, यह ज़रुरी नहीं होना चाहिए।"

Suzanne Paynter ने कहा, "अगर हमें वास्तविक बदलाव चाहिए, तो सबसे पहले हमें बच्चों और युवाओं पर पारिवारिक हिंसा के दीर्घकालिक प्रभाव को पहचानना और उसे संबोधित करना होगा।"

मेलबर्न के प्रमुख भवन, जैसे Melbourne Town Hall, AAMI Park, Old Treasury Building Museum और Myer Melbourne, एक बार फिर एकजुटता के प्रतीक के रुप में बैंगनी रोशनी में जगमगाएंगे। 2025 में इस विजिल में 400 से अधिक लोग शामिल हुए थे और इस वर्ष और अधिक भागीदारी की उम्मीद है।

Safe Steps विक्टोरिया की एकमात्र 24/7 गोपनीय और समावेशी पारिवारिक एवं घरेलू हिंसा सहायता सेवा है, जो उच्च जोखिम स्थितियों में पीड़ित-उत्तरजीवियों को सुरक्षा और निरंतर सहायता प्रदान करती है।

यह कैंडललाइट विजिल पारिवारिक हिंसा के कारण खोए गए लोगों को श्रद्धांजलि देने और बच्चों व युवाओं के लिए बेहतर समर्थन की मांग को आगे बढ़ाने का प्रयास है।

Safe Steps 2026 कैंडललाइट विजिल

तारीख: बुधवार, 6 मई 2026

समय: शाम 6:00 बजे – 6:45 बजे

स्थान: Family Violence Memorial Garden, East Melbourne

Safe Steps के बारे में

Safe Steps उन सभी लोगों को तत्काल सहायता प्रदान करता है जो पारिवारिक और घरेलू हिंसा का सामना कर रहे हैं। यह विक्टोरिया में 24/7 सेवाएं उपलब्ध कराता है और हर साल 1,30,000 से अधिक कॉल, ईमेल और वेब चैट संभालता है।

हर साल लगभग 33,000 रातों का आपातकालीन आवास प्रदान किया जाता है, जिनमें से 43% बच्चे और युवा होते हैं।

यदि आप या आपका कोई परिचित पारिवारिक या घरेलू हिंसा का सामना कर रहा है, तो Safe Steps से 24/7 संपर्क करें:

फोन: 1800 015 188

ईमेल: safesteps@safesteps.org.au

वेबसाइट: safesteps.org.au



From gathering to declaration

*Held in Narrm (Melbourne) from April 27 to 30, the **Women Deliver 2026 Conference** brought together more than 6,000 delegates from 189 countries. **Maria Irene** reports*

MARIA IRENE
@ledgerlifeio

The **Women Deliver 2026 Conference** in Narrm (Melbourne), held from April 27 to 30, brought together more than 6,000 delegates from 189 countries, ending with the launch of the Melbourne Declaration for Gender Equality.

Sessions across the four days focused on accountability, funding systems, leadership and the lived realities shaping gender equality. The gathering opened with calls for structural reform and closed with a collective document that organisers say will guide the next phase of action.

Australia's Minister for Women, Senator the Katy Gallagher, set the tone at the opening, pointing to the role of government in embedding reform across sectors.

"We are taking government action, whether it be in workplace relations, access to justice, in economic policy, and in social services, in education, health, and housing," said Senator Gallagher.

She highlighted changes introduced during the Government's first term, including gender-responsive budgeting.

"Women are the backbone of the care economy, yet they were amongst the lowest paid in Australia. This is not right."

Gallagher said transparency and policy changes are driving progress.

"We are closing the gender pay gap, and we now publish the gender pay gaps of large employers and are making them set targets to reach gender equality, and meet them."

She cautioned that progress remains vulnerable to reversal.

"When it comes to gender equality, progress ❮TURN TO #43❯



> Just two days ago, the global military spending report showed it rose by 2.9% to $2.8 trillion. How do we make sense of this enormous figure?
>
> **DR AMRITA KAPUR**



CONTINUED FROM #42 is not linear and progress made today can be unwound back tomorrow. It is achieved when women make the fight for equality impossible to ignore. It is achieved when governments choose to act, to embed and entrench reform that deliver for women, and make our communities and economies stronger for everybody," she said.

Speakers across the opening sessions said global conditions are placing increasing pressure on women and communities, with conflict, economic instability and climate change shaping outcomes unevenly across regions.

YOUTH, SYSTEMS AND PRESSURE POINTS

The early stages of the conference focused on youth leadership and the role of systems in shaping opportunity. A youth-led pre-conference brought participants together ahead of the main programme, setting priorities that carried into broader discussions.

Sessions highlighted a shift in how younger voices are included in decision-making. Rather than being positioned as observers, participants were involved in shaping agendas and identifying key demands.

A leadership discussion featuring former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, alongside Katie Telford and Leigh Sales, reinforced that direction. The session focused on leadership and inclusion, with emphasis on the role of younger generations in policy formation.

"Being better is not good enough."

Speakers said youth voices have influenced policies on climate action, inclusion and reproductive rights, and are increasingly present within decision-making processes.

Alongside leadership discussions, panels examined structural barriers in global systems, particularly around funding and access. A session titled The Cost: Who Bears the Price of Fiscal Choices brought together Ruth Cross Kwansing, Dr Amrita Kapur, Aapta Garg and Fiana Arbab.

Kwansing said delays in accessing international funding remain a major barrier.

"What do you mean from the international system that you're still not getting more flexibility and greater understanding? Because when you think of what it takes to access these fundings, it generally takes years. If we talk about climate finance mechanisms, it takes years to unlock that funding."

She described how communities can be held back at early stages of funding access.

"I know a visit of islands that are that is stuck in the readiness process, and the readiness process is what actually allows governments to start directly developing these programs or accessing the funding."

Kwansing said current systems tend to prioritise infrastructure over direct community needs.

"So what we need is for those programs to understand that it's not just governments that are solving the issues, because governments solve public issues. And so right now, those financing mechanisms focus on public issues, and what that means is protecting schools or hospitals or roads, but that doesn't protect communities and so, and that's where that's the mechanism that we need to unlock to create that flexibility so that we can solve problems with families directly."

Kapur pointed to global spending priorities as a central issue.

"It's worth taking a moment to look at what this military spending amount means in real terms. Just two days ago, the global military spending report showed it rose by 2.9% to $2.8 trillion. How do we make sense of this enormous figure?"

She said a shift in spending could change outcomes across sectors.

"The five biggest TURN TO #44











> The delusions are broken, and people are rising. Revolution is catching fire around the world

FIANA ARBAB

<CONTINUED FROM #43> spenders were the US, China, Russia, Germany and India, that accounted for 58% but this amount could fund a decade of universal primary health care the world over."

"If we just had three to four years of that funding, we would be able to cover universal education, universal primary health care, eradicate extreme poverty, and do an entire energy transition."

Arbab said the pressure on lower-income countries is growing.

"3.3 billion people now live in countries that spend more on debt servicing than on health and education, and the most food insecure countries, these are the basics of human life, have seen the highest increases in debt."

She said current conditions are affecting both communities and institutions.

"This cost is not only economic and political. It is also human."

Arbab described the impact of conflict and displacement.

"It displaces mainly, I mean, right now it's the SWANA region under direct attack, and it results in extreme repression of the population in all the neighboring countries."

She added that the effects are now being felt more widely.

"I as an upper middle class woman of the global north, raised in the United States, I'm even feeling the pinch locally."

"I've lost funding for the Michigan student power Alliance, which is a nonprofit that I helped found. It's been 10 years in the making, and now we've had to close operations."

"I've also lost my job in the international development sector, which continues to shrink, and I've had to secure another one."

Arbab said public sentiment is shifting.

"The delusions are broken, and people are rising."

"Revolution is catching fire around the world. I'm talking Nepal, Bangladesh, Philippines, Peru, Madagascar, Morocco."

She called for a shift in how cooperation is approached.

"We need to finance like we are in solidarity. We need to connect like we are in solidarity, and we need to dance together like we are in solidarity."

♥ LEADERSHIP, ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE GLOBAL FRAME

Later sessions returned to questions of leadership and accountability, with global figures examining the role of states and institutions.

Former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said responsibility ultimately rests with governments.

"States need to uphold their responsibilities, but then you have the UN of the many organisations which do good work, you know, UN Women, UN Population Fund, fantastic, UNICEF working for children and for girls, UNDP, so many that are doing their best to uphold norms and standards and build a better world."

"So I think the accountability part lies with the Member States, and the Melbourne Declaration goes over and over this, they make commitments, we have to hold them accountable."

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed pointed to leadership gaps.

"A huge drought in leadership, and perhaps if we had more women leading as we had at the time that Right Honourable Helen Clark was, we would make a difference."

She said representation affects outcomes.

"And it's very real, it's not about just equal numbers of men and women, it's about what we come to deliver. Women deliver differently, and they need to be part of that equation."

Mohammed said global systems reflect the decisions of member states.

"I look there and I see member states, and member states who have a responsibility to hold **<TURN TO #45>**



<CONTINUED FROM #44> peace in the world, and the rule of law and the values and the principles of the Charter are the first to step back from it."

She called for change at the highest levels.

"So I hope that we can push for the first woman Secretary General, I know Right Honourable Helen Clark is in the forefront of advocating for that, and maybe we'll begin to see differences."

She pointed to progress within the UN system.

"What we have been able to do, and I said that today, in the last decade we put 219 women in senior positions of leadership, heading agencies, funds and programs, missions in the field."

Mohammed said targeted approaches remain important.

"Better targeted is what you have to go after. Better targeted is what we have to do for the people who are following."

Sue-Anne Hunter, Australia's inaugural National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, highlighted structural challenges affecting First Nations communities.

"These systems have not changed. They are created to remove our children from their families so they actually work exactly the way they are intended to do."

Her remarks reflected wider calls for policies shaped by lived experience and community leadership.

♥ FROM DISCUSSION TO DECLARATION

The conference closed with the launch of the Melbourne Declaration for Gender Equality, described as a collective outcome shaped through global consultation.

Women Deliver CEO Maliha Khan said the gathering had created momentum but needed a clear result.

"But we need something solid to take with us. So I am so delighted to say that we have it. We have the Melbourne Declaration for Gender Equality. Well done, everybody."

She said the process behind the declaration reflected collective effort.

"What we have done is we have created ambition, created solidarity, we've created hope. And all of that for a progressive future of gender equality."

The declaration was developed through more than 30 consultations involving over 650 contributors. A drafting committee including Aisha Fahm, Lauren Farris, Laura Cook, Nina Burling and Sandra Roach was acknowledged for its role.

Khan said early support had been strong.

"We already have over 400 endorsements. 400 of you signed up. Almost 50% of those represent more than just 400 because they are organizations. We have almost 200 organizations that have already endorsed and officially signed on to The Declaration."

She said individuals would also be able to endorse the document.

"Remember, if your organization is not quite ready yet, because of the nature of it, you as individuals can sign on to the Declaration."

Ten countries have signed an accompanying state declaration, including Colombia, Mexico, Slovenia, France, the United Kingdom, Norway, Uruguay, Finland, Spain and Canada.

Khan outlined the focus of the declaration.

"It is pledging to work around states and their obligations to public accountability and to the people who live within the state. Create the conditions for the collective voice and of all the movements that allow social justice to fly, to transform our own institutions, to center local priorities and accountability to the people, and to confront unjust economic systems, and to stand against militarism."

She said the guiding principle moving forward is clear.

"What must come first is solidarity."

The name of the declaration was reconsidered following consultation with First Nations communities.

"We did, for a little while, envision that perhaps we'd be able to call it the NARM Declaration… but we had to ask the First Nations who actually owned that name… and they wanted to keep that name for their own work."

The conference brought together 6,123 participants from 189 countries, with strong representation from the Oceanic Pacific region and Asia. Organisers described it as a gathering shaped by shared experience and collective intent.

Attention now turns to how the commitments outlined in the Melbourne Declaration will be implemented, as governments, organisations and communities carry the work forward beyond Melbourne.



The Salvation Army's multicultural event unites communities

*On 23 April 2026, **The Salvation Army**'s multicultural launch at NSW Parliament House united leaders to support the **Red Shield Appeal***

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The Salvation Army's national **Multicultural Launch** event, held as part of the annual **Red Shield Appeal**, took place on Thursday, 23 April 2026 at NSW Parliament House. The event was formally launched by distinguished leaders from government and business, including Dr. S. Janakiraman, Consul General of India in Sydney; Hon. Warren Kirby MP, NSW Parliament; and Marek Ristwej, Chair of Marque Capital and LBW Trust.

The event brought together business, community, and media leaders from 20+ community groups, raising awareness and supporting the work of The Salvation Army across Australia.

Now in it's 62nd year, The Red Shield Appeal is The Salvation Army's flagship fundraising appeal and Australia's largest and longest running door knock appeal. This year, The Salvation Army are aiming to raise $41 million nationally to fund vital work around the country in areas such as homelessness, family and domestic violence, youth, financial hardship, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, as well as the key work of The Salvation Army within multicultural communities.

Commissioner Miriam Gluyas, Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army said, "The Salvation Army have been committed to standing alongside **<TURN TO #47>**



Bruce Harmer *CG Dr. S Janakiraman*

> Just two days ago, the global military spending report showed it rose by 2.9% to $2.8 trillion. How do we make sense of this enormous figure?

DR AMRITA KAPUR



Salvos Team

《CONTINUED FROM #46》 and supporting those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities for over 140 years, and we continue to provide services and programs in communities that have a lasting impact."

"The Salvation Army Multicultural launch provides The Salvos with an amazing opportunity to connect with multicultural community leaders who are passionate about supporting people within multicultural communities. We are also extremely grateful to Multiconnexions, who have supported The Salvation Army for over 20 years."

Warren Kirby MP, NSW Parliament, said: The Red Shield Appeal is one of Australia's most powerful expressions of collective compassion, uniting communities to restore dignity, resilience, and hope for those facing hardship. I deeply commend The Salvation Army for leading this enduring national effort, and MultiConnexions for strengthening its impact through meaningful community engagement.

Sheba Nandkeolyar, CEO of Multiconnexions and recipient of The Salvation Army's Eva Burrows Award, said: "We are proud to continue hosting The Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal Multicultural Launch for over two decades. 'Be Hope' beautifully reflects the essence of multicultural Australia, where generosity transcends cultures, and giving becomes a shared responsibility that brings deeper meaning to our lives."

Across Australia last year, through The Salvation Army's network of over 400 centres and 2,000 services, the Salvos provided: *

- Assistance to one person every 17 seconds
- More than 1.74 million sessions of care to over 228,000 people in need
- Over 1 million nights of safe accommodation
- More than 1.4 million meals for those who accessed our homelessness services.

*To be the hope by donating to **The Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal**, or if you need support from The Salvos, visit **salvationarmy.org.au** or call **13 SALVOS**. You can also donate at any Salvos Store.*



Jonathan Miriam



Jonathan & Emma - Testimonial Speaker


Sheba Nandkeolyar



Warren Kirby - MP, Member of Riverstone



Marek Ristwej

**The Salvation Army Annual Report 2025*

ABSC Inc hosts Media Conference and Dinner to promote EKONOMOS, Issue 7, 2026

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

On Monday, 20 April 2026, the **Australian Business Summit Council Inc.** hosted its Media Conference and Dinner at Aqua Luna Waterfront Dining with almost one hundred and seventy attendees for an evening that exemplified the strength of Australia's global business, trade and investment dialogue and engagement.

The prestigious event attracted a high-level gathering of VIPS and guests, featuring H.E. Ms. Arjaree Sriratanaban (Ambassador of Thailand); H.E. Mr. Diego Felipe Cadena Montenegro (Ambassador of Colombia); and Ms. Doris Adzo Denyo Brese (High Commissioner of Ghana); along with consuls general and senior representatives from China, Egypt, Malta, Poland, Romania, Ghana, South Korea, Somalia, Turkey and Pakistan, as well as eminent local business figures, including Dr. Joseph Rizk AM (CEO / Managing Director, Arab Bank Australia Ltd) and entrepreneur Mr. Garry Simonian, plus academics, industry professionals and members of the multicultural media.

ABSC Inc. President Dr. Frank Alafaci PhD depicted the evening as both a celebration and a preview—celebrating the relationships built through the Council's ongoing work, and previewing the upcoming seventh issue of EKONOMOS, its flagship business affairs magazine, emphasising that the Australian Business Summit Council Inc. is not simply an organisation, but a platform for engagement where diplomacy meets enterprise, ideas are exchanged with purpose, and partnerships are formed with a long-term vision.

Its centrepiece was the promotion of EKONOMOS, Issue 7, 2026 which continues to position itself as a meeting point of global perspectives, bringing together contributions from twenty-eight distinguished authors spanning diplomacy, business, academia and government, including ambassadors, high commissioners and leading industry figures whose insights reflect a shared commitment to enhancing international trade and investment.

The official program for the evening focussed on three keynote addresses that provided valuable insights into global economic engagement. Ambassador Ms. Arjaree Sriratanaban spoke on the importance of deepening trade and investment ties between Thailand and Australia, highlighting opportunities for collaboration across key sectors. Ambassador Mr. Diego Felipe Cadena 〈TURN TO #49〉


Dr. Frank Alafaci PhD (ABSC Inc. President)



H.E. Ms. Arjaree Sriratanaban (Ambassador of Thailand)


H.E. Mr. Diego Felipe Cadena Montenegro (Ambassador of Colombia)


Mr. Garry Simonian (Entrepreneur)

CONTINUED FROM #48

Montenegro followed with a perspective on Colombia's expanding international engagement, underscoring the important role of multilateral cooperation and sustainable development in advancing global partnerships. Entrepreneur Mr. Garry Simonian delivered a marvellous speech exploring the transformative impact of digital innovation, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies on international business and trade systems.

These keynote presentations were complemented by a one-hour interactive panel discussion moderated by the ABSC Inc. President Dr. Frank Alafaci PhD, which brought together the speakers to address key issues relating to business, trade and investment, and encouraged audience participation, creating a vibrant and inclusive exchange of ideas that reflected the diversity and expertise of those in attendance, while maintaining a clear focus on constructive, non-political dialogue.

Importantly, the success of the Media Conference and Dinner was supported by the generous contribution of sponsors, including Alliance Project Group; Arab Bank Australia Ltd; Symphonic Management Consulting; Trade Window; Serenade Leather; Blue River Wines; EZ Marketing Australia; and DRS ABCD First Aid Training, whose involvement reflects their industry confidence in the mission of the Australian Business Summit Council Inc.



In concluding the evening, the ABSC Inc. President Dr. Frank Alafaci PhD extended his sincere appreciation to the Council's Board of Directors and acknowledged the collective effort required to deliver an occasion of such scale and quality, paying special tribute to the ABSC Inc. Secretary Mrs. Sylvia Alafaci for her leadership in organising the Media Conference and Dinner, from venue selection and table arrangements to overall coordination, as well as to the Aqua Luna events team led by Ms. Anna Finini for their professionalism and support.

The 2026 ABSC Inc. Media Conference and Dinner demonstrated once again the important role in bringing together leaders from diplomacy, business and the wider community to strengthen international relationships and promote Australia as a globally connected and outward-looking economy. With strong momentum generated by this event, anticipation now turns to the ABSC Inc. Annual Gala Dinner on 29 May 2026, where EKONOMOS, Issue 7, 2026 will be formally launched, continuing the Council's efforts to connect Australia to the world.

ABSC Inc. President Dr. Frank Alafaci PhD depicted the evening as both a celebration and a preview—celebrating the relationships built through the Council's ongoing work, and previewing the upcoming seventh issue of EKONOMOS







Saravanaa Bhavan marks 10th Australian outlet with Sydney CBD launch

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Popular South Indian vegetarian chain **Saravanaa Bhavan** has opened a new outlet in Sydney's CBD, marking its third location in the city and tenth across Australia.

The restaurant, located at 263 Clarence Street, will begin operations on Monday, 27 April with a soft launch, offering takeaway and delivery services. Dine-in is expected to begin in the coming weeks once the full opening is completed. Orders are available for pickup or through major delivery platforms across the CBD and nearby areas.

The opening adds to the brand's steady expansion across Australia, where it already has a presence in cities including Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane. The new CBD location places it in a busy part of the city, catering to office workers, visitors and local residents, as well as the South Asian community.

Founded in Chennai, Saravanaa Bhavan has grown into an international chain with outlets across more than 20 countries. It is known for its vegetarian menu based on South Indian cuisine, including dosas, idlis, vadas, thalis and traditional filter coffee. The focus, the company says, has remained on consistency in recipes and cooking methods across its outlets.

The Sydney opening begins with a limited format, allowing operations to settle before a full-scale launch. According **<TURN TO #51>**



Inside the new Saravanaa Bhavan at 263 Clarence Street, Sydney CBD // Photo supplied



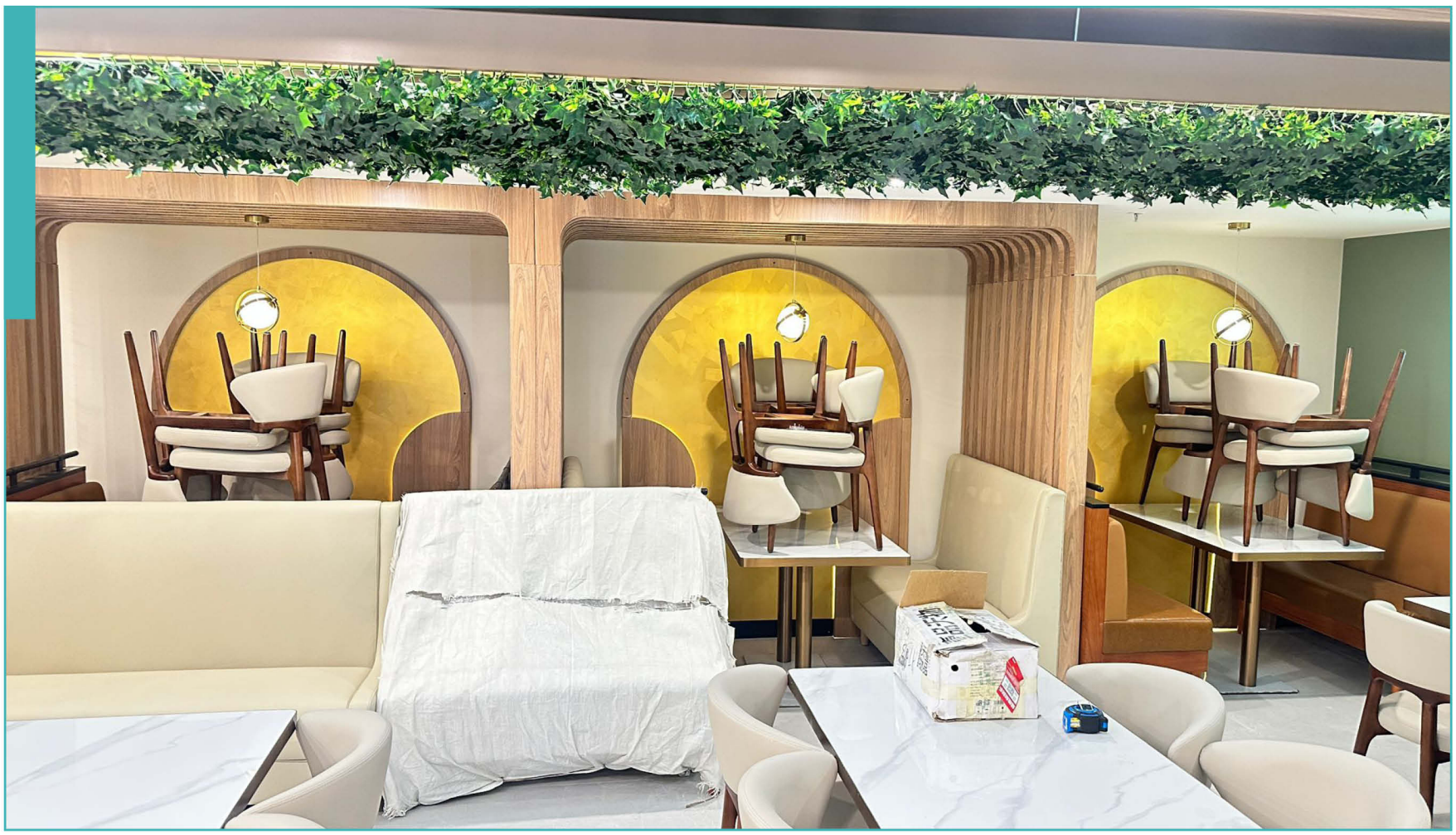
Saravanaa Bhavan's food is rooted in South Indian traditions. The same cultural and community connections seen around temples in Tamil Nadu—such as Madurai Meenakshi, Brihadeeswarar

CONTINUED FROM #50 to the company, the complete dine-in experience, along with a formal opening, will be introduced in the coming weeks.

Saravanaa Bhavan's food is rooted in South Indian traditions. The same cultural and community connections seen around temples in Tamil Nadu—such as Madurai Meenakshi, Brihadeeswarar and Kapaleeshwarar—are reflected in its focus on simple, shared vegetarian meals.

The restaurant's hallmark lies in its unwavering commitment to freshness, tradition, and the pure flavours of this heritage. Every dish is prepared using time-honoured recipes and the highest standards of hygiene—making it a beloved institution for the Indian diaspora and food enthusiasts alike.

The latest addition, therefore, reflects the continued growth of Indian dining options in Australia, particularly in metropolitan centres where demand for regional cuisines has been steadily rising.



For multicultural families, stigma delays autism support

DR. RAJ KHILLAN
@the_indian_sun

For many multicultural families, the hardest part is not the diagnosis, but the fear, stigma and delay that come before it.

THE CHILD IS SPEAKING, BUT ARE WE LISTENING?

On 2 April, buildings across Australia will glow blue for World Autism Awareness Day. Social media will fill with kind words. Schools will speak about inclusion. Communities will pause to acknowledge autistic children and adults, and the families who support them every day.

But behind many front doors, the reality is far more complicated.

There are parents who have been worried for months. Mothers who sense something is different but do not know how to say it aloud. Fathers who fear the label more than the struggle. Grandparents who insist the child will "grow out of it". Families who smile in public, but cry in private. Families who know something is not quite right, yet are too afraid, too confused or too overwhelmed to seek help.

That is why World Autism Awareness Day must mean more than blue lights.

For many multicultural families in Australia, the biggest barrier is not always autism itself. It is the silence around it.

THE FEAR THAT DELAYS THE FIRST STEP



Representational Photo by Ashwini Chaudhary(Monty) on Unsplash

For many **multicultural families**, the biggest barrier to **autism support** is not the diagnosis itself—it's the hidden fear, community stigma, and silence that delay seeking help

Autism often does not arrive with a dramatic announcement. It comes quietly. A child is slower to speak. A toddler does not respond to their name. A preschooler struggles with eye contact, noise, change or social interaction. A child may seem bright, loving and unique, but still find everyday communication and connection much harder than expected.

Parents notice these things. They usually do.

But noticing is one thing. Acting is another.

In many migrant and multicultural families, the first response is not always help-seeking. It is often hesitation. Some families hope the child will catch up. Some are reassured by relatives that "boys talk late". Some fear being judged. Some do not want their child labelled. Some worry that a diagnosis will bring shame, gossip or lifelong misunderstanding.

And so the waiting begins.

What starts as uncertainty can turn into months, sometimes years, of delay.

CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND QUIET STIGMA

In many communities, autism is still not openly understood. It may be confused with bad behaviour, stubbornness, poor parenting or simply being a "late bloomer". Some parents fear that others will blame the mother. Some worry about how the child will be treated at school, in the community or even within the extended family. Some fear what people will say. Others fear what people will stop saying.

This stigma is often hidden, but it is deeply powerful.

For many South Asian families, including Indian families, these fears can be shaped by experiences from back home, where developmental conditions may have been poorly understood or rarely discussed. Some families come to Australia without ever having seen autism explained clearly or compassionately. They may not know what support looks like. They may never have heard the message that early help can make a real difference.

Instead of clarity, they carry confusion.

Instead of support, they carry silence.

A SYSTEM THAT CAN FEEL IMPOSSIBLE

Even when families decide to seek help, the pathway is not always easy.

Australia has services, but for many families, those services can feel like a maze.

Parents may not know whether to start with a GP, paediatrician, psychologist, speech pathologist or occupational therapist. They may not understand how assessment works, what services are available, or how disability support systems fit into the picture.

For families who are new to Australia, this can be especially difficult. Healthcare systems vary enormously from country to country. What seems obvious to one family may be completely unfamiliar to another.

Language barriers make everything heavier. A parent may know exactly what they are worried about but not know how to explain it in English. Medical forms can feel intimidating. Reports can feel confusing. Questions may go unasked because families feel embarrassed or lost.

This is how children can fall behind, not because parents do not care, but because they do not know how to navigate the road ahead.

THE BURDEN IS HEAVIER OUTSIDE THE CITIES

For families in regional, rural and outer suburban areas, the barriers grow even larger. Getting to a specialist may require long travel, time off work, juggling other children and waiting months for appointments. Even where help exists, it may not be close, affordable or timely.

Cost is another hard reality.

Private assessment can be expensive. Public services can involve long waits. For families already dealing with rent, school costs, transport and everyday living pressures, the process can feel financially and emotionally exhausting.

For some multicultural families, there is another burden: isolation. Many do not have extended family nearby. Some have limited local support. Some are still finding their feet in Australia. When a child needs developmental assessment, parents can feel very alone.

WHY TRUST CHANGES EVERYTHING

As a paediatrician who has worked in India, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, the UK and Australia, I have seen how much culture shapes the autism conversation. I have also seen how quickly fear softens when families feel understood.

When parents can speak in their own language, they often share the real story. When grandparents hear autism explained respectfully, they may move from resistance to support. When clinicians understand family dynamics, migration stress, cultural pressures and community stigma, the conversation becomes safer.

That trust matters.

Speaking English, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and some Arabic has shown me again and again that families do not simply need information. They need reassurance. They need dignity. They need someone to tell them clearly that autism is not caused by bad parenting, not caused by bilingualism, and not something shameful to hide.

A diagnosis is not the end of hope. For many families, it is the beginning of understanding.

AWARENESS MUST REACH THE HOME

World Autism Awareness Day is important. It creates visibility. It reminds society to be more inclusive. It helps bring autism into public conversation.

But real awareness begins when fear leaves the family home.

It begins when parents feel safe to ask questions early. It begins when grandparents understand that early support is not a disgrace. It begins when communities stop whispering and start learning. It begins when services become easier to access, easier to understand and more culturally responsive.

In multicultural Australia, true autism awareness must be more than a campaign. It must be a bridge between families and help, between stigma and understanding, between silence and support.

So yes, let the buildings turn blue on 2 April.

But let us also make sure that behind those blue lights, no family is left sitting in confusion, fear or shame.

Dr Raj Khillan *is a Melbourne paediatrician, Founder and Director of Western Specialist Centre, and Victoria's Australian of the Year 2023. He is a leading voice in child development, autism awareness and multicultural health, and is deeply committed to helping families access early diagnosis, support and culturally sensitive care*

The hidden autism signs in girls: What we're missing in diagnosis

DR. RAJ & DR. PREETI KHILLAN
@the_indian_sun

Why bright, talkative girls are still being missed, and why autism in girls looks very different from boys?

For many families, the word autism still brings up an old stereotype: a boy who avoids eye contact, struggles to speak, plays alone, and shows obvious repetitive behaviours. That image is deeply familiar, and deeply incomplete.

Because many autistic girls do not look like that at all.

They may be bright, chatty, imaginative and academically capable. They may speak early, use advanced language, and appear socially interested. Some are described as mature for their age. Others are polite, gentle, helpful and eager to please. On the surface, they may look like they are coping well.

But underneath, many are struggling far more than anyone realises.

That is why autism in girls is so often missed.

NOT THE AUTISM WE WERE TAUGHT TO SEE

Autism is diagnosed more often in boys than girls. For years, people quoted a ratio of around four boys to every one girl. But many experts now believe the gap is not that simple. Girls are likely being under-recognised because autism in girls often presents differently.

Representational Photo by Hiki App on Unsplash

Many **autistic girls** are bright, verbal, and socially eager—but their struggles are hidden behind masking, leading to missed diagnoses and years of unnecessary distress

In other words, it is not always less common in girls. It is often less obvious.

The problem is that the traditional understanding of autism has been shaped largely by how it appears in boys. So, when a girl does not fit that picture, concerns are brushed aside. She may be called shy, anxious, sensitive, quirky, perfectionistic, dramatic or "just a bit different".

But sometimes that "difference" is autism that no one has recognised.

BRIGHT GIRLS CAN STILL STRUGGLE DEEPLY

One of the biggest myths is that a girl cannot be autistic if she is intelligent, verbal or doing well at school.

That is simply not true.

A girl may have a high IQ. She may speak beautifully. She may read early, ask thoughtful questions, and sound mature beyond her years. She may even look socially confident. But speaking well is not the same as finding social life easy.

Communication is more than words. It is knowing when to join in, how to keep a conversation flowing, how to read facial expressions, how to understand tone, sarcasm, hidden meanings, jokes, shifting friendships and unspoken rules.

This is where many autistic girls quietly struggle.

They may know how to talk but still feel lost in social situations. They may want friendships desperately but not know how to manage them. They may say all the right things, yet still come home feeling exhausted, confused and overwhelmed.

THE MASK THAT HIDES THE STRUGGLE

Many autistic girls are highly skilled at masking.

They watch other children closely. They copy speech, facial expressions, gestures and social habits. They force eye contact. They rehearse conversations before going to school or social events. They learn how to blend in.

To the outside world, this can look like social success.

But masking is not the same as ease. It is effort. It is performance. And it can be exhausting.

This is one of the biggest reasons girls are diagnosed later than boys. Adults see a girl who is talking, smiling and participating, and assume she is fine. What they may not see is how much energy it is taking her to appear fine.

That is why so many parents say the same thing: "She holds it together at school but falls apart at home."

That pattern matters. Home is often the only place where the mask comes off.

FRIENDSHIPS ARE OFTEN THE REAL BATTLEGROUND

Many autistic girls do not avoid friendship. In fact, many long for it deeply.

But friendship can be one of their greatest challenges.

A girl may have only one or two close friends. She may become intense, possessive or deeply hurt when those friendships change. She may struggle in groups, hover at the edge of social circles, or copy others just to stay included. She may seem socially interested but still not understand the hidden rules that hold peer groups together.

Some girls become "mothered" by classmates. Others are seen as overly sensitive, too serious or too controlling in play. Some have rich fantasy lives and vivid imaginations but prefer to direct play their own way. Some seem extroverted when talking about their favourite interest but become uncertain and anxious in everyday peer interaction.

It is not that they do not care. Often, they care deeply. That is what makes the struggle so painful.

WHEN INTERESTS LOOK ORDINARY, AUTISM GETS MISSED

Another reason girls are overlooked is that their interests may not look unusual at first glance.

A boy's intense interest in train timetables or vacuum cleaners may raise questions quickly. A girl's intense interest in animals, books, celebrities, music, fashion, mythology, art or fictional worlds may look perfectly typical.

But the clue is not always the topic. It is the intensity.

Many autistic girls have interests that are unusually deep, all-consuming, repetitive or rigid.

They may return to them constantly, talk about them endlessly, organise life around them, or become upset when those interests are interrupted.

Because the interest itself looks socially acceptable, the autistic pattern underneath can be missed.

THE HIDDEN COST OF BEING MISSED

A delayed diagnosis is not just a delay in getting a label. It is often a delay in understanding, support and self-protection.

When a girl spends years trying to fit in while feeling different inside, the emotional cost can be enormous. She may begin to think she is failing at being "normal". She may lose confidence. She may develop anxiety, low mood, school refusal, burnout or emotional shutdown. Some girls are treated only for anxiety or depression, while the autism underneath remains unseen.

By adolescence, the pressure often grows. Friendships become more layered. Social expectations become harder. Puberty adds another layer of confusion. The girl who once looked like she was coping may suddenly start to unravel.

And by then, the struggle has often been there for years.

FIRST SIGNS FAMILIES SHOULD NOT IGNORE

The signs in girls are often subtle, but they are there.

Parents and teachers should look more closely when a girl consistently seems exhausted after social settings, struggles to keep friendships despite wanting them badly, copies others to fit in, becomes overwhelmed by noise, clothing textures or food, shows intense interests, needs control in play, or releases all her distress only at home.

A girl can be chatty and still be autistic.

A girl can be bright and still be autistic.

A girl can make eye contact and still be autistic.

A girl can have friends and still be autistic.

That is the message we need to understand.

WE NEED A NEW LENS FOR GIRLS

The real question is not whether a girl "looks autistic". The real question is how much effort it is taking her to look as though she is not.

If we continue to judge autism only by old stereotypes, we will keep missing girls who need help, understanding and support. But if we widen our lens, listen carefully, and look beneath the surface, we can recognise these girls earlier and support them better.

And for many families, that recognition can change everything.

Dr Raj Khillan *is a Melbourne paediatrician, Founder and Director of Western Specialist Centre, and Victoria's Australian of the Year 2023. He is a leading voice in child development, autism awareness and multicultural health, and is deeply committed to helping families access early diagnosis, support and culturally sensitive care.*

Dr Preeti Khillan *is a senior Obstetrician and Gynaecologist and Director of Western Specialist Centre. A passionate advocate for women's, children's and family health, she is recognised for her leadership in community education and her commitment to delivering compassionate, culturally responsive healthcare.*

Growing up on the spectrum: Puberty, pressure and protection

DR. PREETI KHILLAN
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Why autistic children need clearer guidance, safer boundaries and more understanding in the teenage years

Puberty does not wait for a child to be ready. For autistic children, it can arrive with confusion, sensory distress, social pressure and a level of vulnerability that many families are not warned about. While the body may mature on time, understanding often does not, and that is where fear, frustration and risk can begin.

Autistic children go through the same physical changes as other children, but they do not always understand or manage those changes in the same way. A child may look older on the outside, yet still struggle with body awareness, emotional control, privacy, friendships and the hidden social rules that come with adolescence. That gap between physical growth and emotional readiness is why puberty in autism needs earlier conversations, clearer guidance and far more understanding.

WHEN A CHANGING BODY FEELS OVERWHELMING

Puberty brings many visible changes. Girls may begin breast development and periods. Boys may notice erections, wet dreams, body hair and voice changes. Both may experience body odour, acne, growth spurts and stronger emotions.



Representational Photo by Miles Monares on Unsplash

For **autistic children**, **puberty** brings confusing body changes, heightened emotions, and social risks. Clear guidance, early teaching, and safe boundaries are essential

For many autistic children, these changes are not just awkward, they can feel frightening. A child may not understand why their body feels different, why routines are changing, or why they are suddenly expected to manage new tasks on their own. Some may become upset by pain, smells, textures or the feeling of pads, bras, deodorant or new clothing. Others may not know how to explain what is bothering them.

What adults see as a normal step in growing up can feel like a loss of control to an autistic teenager. When that distress is missed, the child is often labelled difficult instead of being properly supported.

BIG EMOTIONS, BUT NOT ALWAYS THE WORDS

Puberty is not only a physical change. It is also a time of bigger feelings, greater self-consciousness and rising social pressure.

Many autistic young people already find it hard to manage stress, sensory overload or sudden change. Puberty can magnify all of this. Some may become more anxious, more emotional or more withdrawn. Others may have more meltdowns, more shutdowns or stronger reactions that families and schools struggle to understand.

The real problem is that behaviour is often judged without asking what is driving it.

Sometimes the child is not being rude, defiant or dramatic. They may be overwhelmed, confused, embarrassed or frightened. They may be struggling with pain, body changes they do not understand, or social situations they cannot read. Puberty can make a child feel unsettled in their own skin, and many do not have the words to explain why.

THE SOCIAL RULES BECOME HARDER TO READ

As children enter adolescence, the world around them also changes. Friendships become more layered. There may be gossip, teasing, flirting, crushes and pressure to fit in. Suddenly, teenagers are expected to understand privacy, boundaries, personal space and what is socially acceptable.

For autistic children, these hidden rules are often much harder to pick up.

They may not realise when someone is joking, mocking or manipulating them. They may mistake attention for friendship. They may not recognise when a conversation, touch or online interaction is inappropriate. They may copy behaviour they have seen elsewhere without understanding when, where or why it is not acceptable.

This is one of the greatest hidden challenges of puberty in autism. Society expects teenagers to "just know", but many autistic teenagers need these rules taught clearly, directly and many times over.

PERIODS, WET DREAMS AND PRIVATE WORRIES

One of the biggest problems for families is silence. Parents often feel awkward starting the conversation. Schools may keep the topic too broad. Children may not know what to ask or may not even realise that a question needs asking.

That is why practical teaching matters so much.

A girl may have heard of periods but still panic when she sees blood for the first time. A boy may be frightened by a wet dream if nobody has explained it beforehand. A child may know the word "puberty" but still have no idea how often to change a pad, when to shower more often, how to use deodorant, or what should happen only in private.

Autistic children need clear, step-by-step guidance. They need plain words, repetition and reassurance. They need to know what changes may happen, what to do when they happen, and who they can go to for help.

A SERIOUS RISK FAMILIES MUST NOT IGNORE

Puberty also brings a more difficult truth: autistic children and teenagers can be more vulnerable to bullying, manipulation and sexual abuse.

A child who trusts easily, wants to please others, or struggles to understand body boundaries may be at greater risk. Some may not realise that something wrong has happened. Others may feel uncomfortable but may not have the language, confidence or emotional skills to tell anyone.

That is why body safety teaching is essential.

Children need to know the correct names for body parts. They need to understand that their body belongs to them. They need to learn the difference between safe touch and unsafe touch. They need to know that private parts are private, that nobody should ask them to keep secrets about touching, and that they can always tell a trusted adult if something feels wrong.

Silence does not protect children. Clear teaching does.

WHAT PARENTS, SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY NEED TO DO

The answer is not fear. The answer is preparation.

Start early. Use plain language. Repeat key messages often. Teach body changes before they happen, not after a child is frightened. Use pictures, visual supports, simple routines and real-life practice. Explain public and private behaviour clearly. Talk about periods, erections, hygiene, consent, personal boundaries and online safety without shame.

Parents should not have to carry this burden alone. Schools need to make puberty education more practical and inclusive. Health professionals need to give families simple, useful guidance. Society also needs to stop assuming that because a child looks older, they understand more.

A child may look grown up but still need a great deal of support to manage emotions, friendships, privacy and safety.

GROWING UP WITH DIGNITY

Autism does not stop puberty, and puberty does not erase autism.

When these two worlds meet, children need more patience, more honesty and more protection. With the right support, autistic children can learn to understand their changing bodies, manage emotions, protect their boundaries and move into adolescence with greater confidence.

The goal is not to make them seem like everyone else. The goal is to help them grow up safe, informed and respected.

Every child deserves that.

Dr Preeti Khillan *is an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist based in Melbourne, with a strong interest in women's health, family wellbeing and culturally sensitive healthcare. Through clinical work and community education, she is passionate about helping families better understand children's development, puberty, safety and emotional wellbeing*



Stuart DaCosta on bass

Pack Your Feelings. The Yellow Diary arrives from Mumbai



After years of fan requests, Mumbai alt-rock band **The Yellow Diary** finally bring their Hindi-English debut album to Australia this May for their first tour

INDIRA LAISRAM
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When **The Yellow Diary** land in Australia this May, it will not feel like a first meeting. For years, listeners here have been writing to the Mumbai-based band, asking them to come down under. The music has travelled ahead of them.

I caught up with the band on Zoom just before they packed their bags for Australia. It marks their first tour here, a moment they say has been a long time coming.

"We already have people who listen to our music and keep writing to us," says vocalist Rajan Batra. "So it doesn't feel like we are performing for an entirely new audience. But we are definitely looking forward to doing it for the first time."

The band, known for blending Hindi poetry with a modern alt-rock and pop sound, is touring Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne with their debut album In Case We Forget. It is a long way from where they began in 2015, playing small gigs and asking friends to turn up.

"At our first show, we asked all our friends to come," Rajan recalls. "We performed for them, and when they enjoyed it, that feeling stayed with us."

That feeling, he says, has only grown over time. From those early shows to festival stages like NH7 Weekender, and now to international tours, the band has built what they call a "community" around their music.

"The community keeps giving," he says. "When people sing back to us and feel the emotions we write about, it becomes very rewarding."

At the heart of it all is the idea behind their name. The Yellow Diary is not just a band title, it is a way of thinking about their music.

"It comes from how the songs are written," explains music producer and keyboardist Himonshu Parikh. "They come from personal experiences, thoughts, things you would journal. Like coming home and saying, 'Dear diary, this is what happened today.'"

And the colour yellow?

"For us, yellow is a mysterious colour," he says. "It looks happy, but it carries a range of emotions. From very dark to very bright. Every song is like a different page in that diary."

That openness is what gives the band its sound. It is not something they ❮TURN TO #61❯



Harsh on guitars



Sahil Shah on drums



That sense of connection has also shaped their ambitions. Once seen as part of India's independent music scene, the band now sees itself differently



L-R: Rajan (v), Sahil (d), Stuart (b), Harsh (g), Himonshu (k)

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<CONTINUED FROM #59> sat down to design. "It is not something we searched for," Himonshu says. "It is just who we are and what we listen to. We never say, 'let's sound like this'. We just express and see what comes out."

Drummer Sahil Shah agrees that this mix is what connects with listeners, especially those outside India.

"There is always a bit of nostalgia when you are playing to an audience away from home," he says. "But at the same time, we represent a modern sound. So it becomes a balance of both."

That balance carries into their live shows. The band is known for stretching songs, playing with arrangements and building a strong connection with the audience.

"The crowd is the final piece of the puzzle," Sahil says. "When they sing the songs back to us, everything feels complete. That is the biggest validation for us."

Guitarist Harsh, the quietest of the group, puts it simply. "Music explains itself," he says. "We don't really need to explain it."

The new album, In Case We Forget, leans into reflection. The title itself came from a moment of looking back.



"At first, it felt like we were writing diary entries," Rajan says. "Now it feels like a journal of our journey. This album became a way to remember who we were when we wrote this music."

"We are constantly travelling together, living together," he says. "It has made us tighter as a band, like a family. And we have realised that no matter which city we go to, there is a certain similarity in our audience."

That sense of connection has also shaped their ambitions. Once seen as part of India's independent music scene, the band now sees itself differently.

"When we started, we were doing everything ourselves," Rajan says. "But over time, we found support from labels, brands, collaborators. I think we have moved beyond just being an independent band."

He adds, "We want to become an Indian global act. To go to the biggest platforms and represent India."

Australia is one step in that journey.

Asked what audiences here can expect, the answer is unanimous.

"All of the above," Harsh says, when offered a choice between explosive and quiet.

Himonshu expands on that. "All their favourite songs, all the new songs, and a really electric live experience. It will be emotional. We love spending time with our listeners."

And when they land?

"Beat the jet lag," Sahil laughs.

"Go hug some koalas," Rajan adds.

Himonshu has a simpler plan. "Get a burger straight away."

Between the humour and the music, one thing is clear. The Yellow Diary is not just bringing a setlist to Australia. They are bringing a body of work built on memory, emotion and the quiet hope that someone, somewhere, will see themselves in it.

And if the messages they have been getting are anything to go by, Australia is ready to sing them back.

Catch The Yellow Diary live in Brisbane, Sydney & Melbourne this May.

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Presented by ACMI and RISING, The Vinyl Factory: Reverb is now open at ACMI



OUR REPORTER
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Originally produced and staged at 180 Studios in London, the exhibition features works by Stan Douglas, Jenn Nkiru, William Kentridge, Jeremy Deller, Virgil Abloh, Kahlil Joseph, Gabriel Moses, Cecilia Bengolea, Julianknxx and Carsten Nicolai. It also showcases The Vinyl Factory Collection, and original commissions shown to celebrate 20 years of artistic collaborations.

The exhibition explores vinyl culture and music's influence on art, fashion, film and social movements. It dives into different eras and energies of music, from the early days of techno and house to contemporary digital art. From Kingston's dancehall scene to the late-80s 'Second Summer of Love', and beyond.

Get immersed in a sculptural sound system. Jump on the Technics and play with endlessly remixable vinyl loops. Dip into the hypnotism of a six-hour jam film set in a reconstruction of 'The Church'—the legendary New York studio where Miles Davis, Pink Floyd and Bob Dylan recorded. Witness a fantasy rap battle racing down copper lines from Cairo to London. Roam The Vinyl Factory's eclectic archive of 100 pressings from Massive Attack, Grace Jones, Daft Punk and more.

Head to the Listening Room and select from a curated collection of records for some deep listening. This London hit is an acoustically optimised sanctuary for pristine sound. After hours, the room hosts weekly one-off sessions, giving you the chance to see local and international artists up close, with additional events during RISING. Selected sessions are curated by Yasmine Sharaf, presenter for Triple R's Cease + Desist and a specialist in underground sounds.

For more info go to ***https://www.acmi.net.au/whats-on/the-vinyl-factory-reverb/***

Cairns to host para-swimmer Muhammed Aasim for community meet and greet





OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Cairns will host a community meet and greet this Saturday with Indian para-swimmer **Muhammed Aasim**, as the athlete continues advanced training in Far North Queensland and draws attention for his journey in para swimming.

The event will be held at Stellarossa Earlville Cafe, where families, young people and community members are invited to meet Aasim and hear about his experience in international sport. Organisers say the session will offer a relaxed setting for conversation and engagement.

Aasim, who lives with a 90 per cent physical disability, began swimming only a few years ago and has since ❮TURN TO #65❯



> This is more than just a meet and greet—it's about coming together as a community to celebrate courage and support a mission that uplifts others
>
> **AN ORGANISER**

<CONTINUED FROM #64>

progressed to competing globally. His development in para swimming has drawn interest within the Cairns community and among members of the Indian diaspora in Australia.

Attendees will hear directly from Aasim about his training, discipline and approach to competition. The session is expected to focus on both his sporting pathway and the personal challenges he has faced.

The gathering will also include a fundraising initiative to support Aasim's foundation, which works to improve access to sport and opportunities for people with disabilities. Organisers say the aim is to build support for his ongoing work and future competitions.

"This is more than just a meet and greet—it's about coming together as a community to celebrate courage and support a mission that uplifts others," one organiser said.

Community leaders say the event reflects the role of multicultural engagement in regional centres such as Cairns, where visiting athletes and international connections continue to shape local participation in sport.

Aasim's visit comes as Cairns strengthens its position as a training destination for athletes, supported by climate conditions and sporting infrastructure in Far North Queensland. His presence has added interest among local swimmers and youth groups.

Organisers say the event is open to all and expect a mix of community members, including families and students, to attend. The session is positioned as an opportunity for young people to engage with an athlete competing at an international level in para swimming.

For the Indian community in Cairns, the visit has been described as a point of connection, while for the broader public it provides exposure to disability sport and inclusive participation.

The meet and greet will take place this Saturday at Stellarossa Earlville Cafe, with proceeds from the fundraising effort directed towards Aasim's foundation and future initiatives.

From accountant to WWE fighter: Shanky Singh hits Melbourne



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

There's something disarmingly simple about the way **Shanky Singh** tells his story. No grand claims, no larger-than-life drama—just a quiet honesty about how far he's come.

"I'm still on that journey in my wrestling career," he said over Zoom from India before his recent main event in Melbourne.

Before wrestling, Shanky was working as an accountant at a university—a stable, respectable job, the kind many middle-class families would be proud of. Wrestling wasn't even on his radar.

"I had never really thought that I would go into the wrestling business," he said.

But something didn't sit right.

"The turning point was that everyone has something they truly like in life. When I was working as an accountant, I didn't really enjoy it. So I changed my path." **<TURN TO #67>**



CONTINUED FROM #66

That decision—to walk away from certainty—came with its own struggles. No sports background, no family legacy in wrestling. Just a guy who decided to take a hard left turn.

"I faced many tough situations when I started my wrestling career," he said.

He built his way up the hard way, performing across India—from Karnal to Udaipur, Dehradun to Haldwani—learning the craft one show at a time. There were small breaks too, including a role in the Bollywood movie Bharat alongside Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif.

Then came the moment that changed everything. WWE noticed him. He'd tried out earlier in Dubai in 2017 and didn't make the cut. Then in 2019, another chance. He got selected. By January 2020, he was on his way to the US for four months.

"It was a very big experience," he said. "The journey has been amazing because I started out as an accountant and ended up in wrestling."

Ahead of his match on April 26th in Melbourne against former WWE star Parker Boudreaux, Shanky promised fans a show. Looking back, he knew what they expected. "Melbourne fans can expect proper entertainment—the kind of entertaining wrestling match people want to see."

What was the biggest lesson WWE taught him? Discipline.

"If you have discipline in life, if you value timing, if you understand that timing is everything... For example, you gave me 9:30 and I was here before time."

His diet is strict—protein, carbs, good fats, chicken, white rice, oats. Repetitive. Controlled.

He's around seven feet tall, and yes, being that tall helps in the ring. But off it? "Is finding a girlfriend hard with your height?" he was asked. His answer: "Yeah, very, very difficult. Very difficult."

The glamour of wrestling often hides the physical toll. There was a time when his family was very worried. In one brutal match, he took 34 chair shots from Drew McIntyre—a beating that would have broken most. He remembered it not with bitterness, but with unfinished business.

He said he was still waiting for that moment of revenge—"when I will give him double of that one day."

For Shanky, stepping into the ring was never just personal. "It's a big opportunity. Not many people get this chance," he said. "It feels good to represent our people."

He was also clear-eyed about the gaps back home.

"India doesn't have that kind of wrestling platform yet... India still needs a stronger wrestling platform."

His message to the crowd in Victoria ahead of the bout? "You'll get the best, maybe even a championship-level performance, and you'll feel proud that Shanky has come here to win."

From a desk job to a main event in Melbourne—that's Shanky Singh. And while the final bell has already rung on that April night, his journey, as he puts it, is still very much in motion.

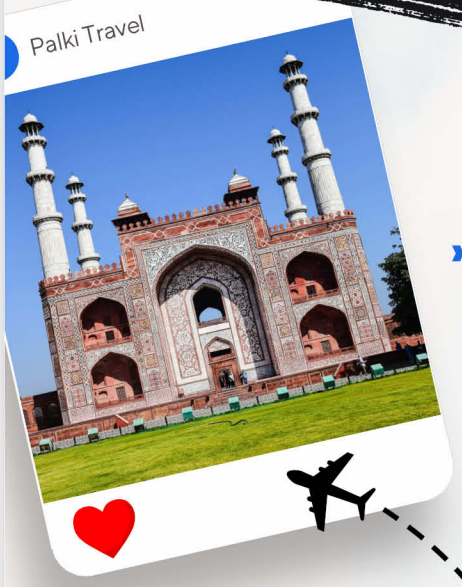
> In many ways, it marks a return to the game for me—but in a very different role. This is about helping uphold the standards and spirit of cricket
>
> **STEVE WAUGH**

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