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How a Christian girl from Colombo found her calling in Bharatanatyam and built a community in Melbourne



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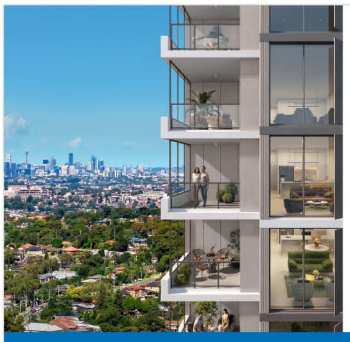
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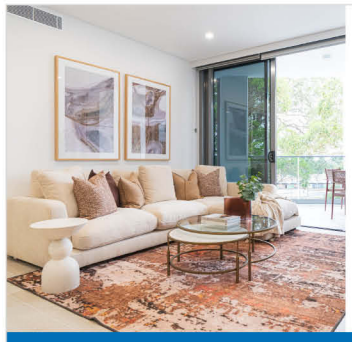
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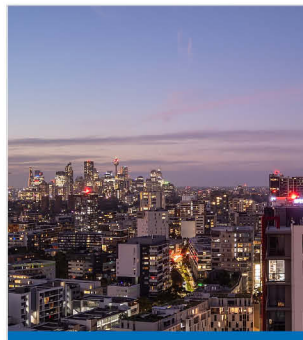
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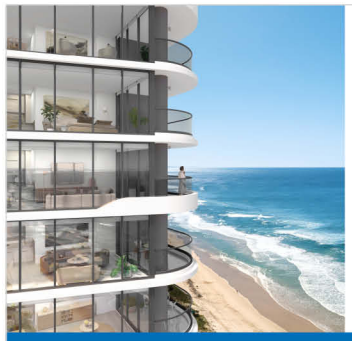
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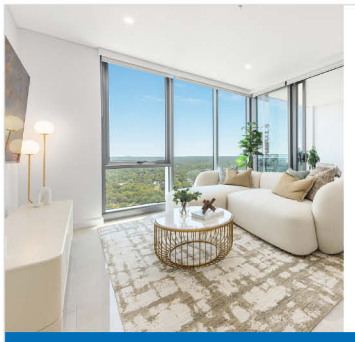
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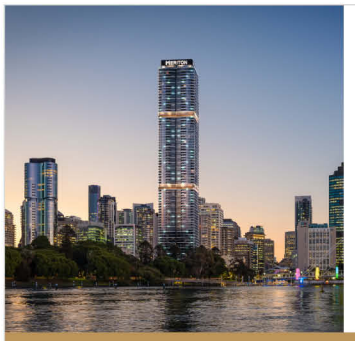
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THE QUESTIONS AHEAD

Dear Readers,



June arrives with a curious mix of confidence and uncertainty.

Business investment is rising. Households remain under pressure. The Quad is becoming more active at a time when the Indo-Pacific is growing more contested. One Nation is polling at levels that would have seemed improbable only a few years ago. Political parties are recalculating. Communities are paying attention.

This edition reflects that mood.

Our cover story follows Christina Prakanthan, who arrived in Melbourne in 2012 with a handful of flyers and a plan to teach Bharatanatyam. Fourteen years later, Natyatharu School of Dance has become a respected institution with students spanning generations. This month, her annual concert will feature live musicians performing alongside the dancers. It is a reminder that worthwhile things are often built slowly, long after the initial excitement fades.



The economy tells a similar story of patience and uncertainty. Private sector investment rose strongly in the March quarter, driven by areas such as data centres, battery storage and renewable energy. That is encouraging for an economy that has spent years searching for stronger productivity growth.

Yet households continue to feel pressure from mortgage repayments, power bills and everyday costs. Businesses appear willing to invest in the future while consumers remain cautious about the present. Whether those two trends can coexist for long is one of the bigger economic questions facing Australia.

On the international front, the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi highlighted how much the Indo-Pacific has changed. Discussions focused on critical minerals, maritime security, ports, supply chains and energy resilience. These are practical issues rather than abstract diplomatic concepts. They shape trade, investment and the movement of goods across a region that has become central to the global economy.

Closer to home, politics is becoming harder to predict. We examined the ongoing tensions between Melbourne's Indian community and the Victorian Liberal Party, a relationship that remains unsettled ahead of this year's state election. At the same time, new polling suggesting One Nation has moved ahead of Labor on primary vote support points to a shift in voter sentiment. Polls are snapshots rather than forecasts, but they often reveal underlying currents.

There is no shortage of big questions in this edition. The political mood is shifting. Australia's relationship with India continues to deepen. Communities continue to build their own institutions. We cover these stories because each matters in its own way.

We hope you find this June edition worth your time.

Best wishes,
SIDDHARTH SURESH

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Explore what’s on

VICTORIA State Government | CREATIVE VICTORIA



Panel members discuss how the 2026 Census will shape services, representation and the future of multicultural Australia // Photo TIS

Census 2026: It's about being seen, not just a headcount

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

In a packed community room in Melbourne, a panel of experts had a direct message for multicultural Australia: the upcoming **2026 Census** is not just a boring form you have to fill out. It is a chance to be seen, to be counted, and to shape the country you live in.

For the first time, Australians will be able to list up to four ancestries instead of just two. New questions on gender and sexual orientation will include write-in boxes. And the data collected will decide everything from where your bus stop is located to whether your local library stocks books in your language.

This was the message from a multicultural community panel yesterday, where speakers and audience members dug into the details of the census, shared personal stories, and asked the tough questions about privacy, AI, and penalties.

Jenny Telford, the General Manager of Census and Population at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), told the room that the census is far more than just a population count.

"It asks questions on things like health, education, work, cultural background and living circumstances, helping us understand how our population is changing and what communities need now and into the future," she said.

The decision to allow people to list up to four ancestries was a big moment in the discussion.

"For many Australians, identity is layered and complex, and this change better reflects that reality," Telford said.

Dr Judy Tang, Commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, opened the panel by sharing her own family story to show why this matters so much.

"My parents are Vietnamese born, but ancestry-wise Chinese," she said. "Before 1986, they didn't capture that diversity."

She explained that the census gives communities hard numbers to back up their stories.

"The census allows us to amplify that with data to advocate for improved housing and employment services," she said.

Dr Tang also welcomed the new questions on gender and sexual orientation for people aged 16 and over, which will include write-in options so people can describe themselves in their own words.

"One of the things I'm particularly interested in is the intersection of multicultural and LGBTQIA+, which is often an invisible community," she said.

One of the strongest messages from the panel was that the census touches almost every part of daily life, often in ways people do not realise. Dr Tang 〈TURN TO #11〉

> The census allows us to amplify that with data to advocate for improved housing and employment services
>
> **DR JUDY TANG**

<CONTINUED FROM #10> pointed to a simple but powerful example. “Whether you have a bus stop that’s close enough to you… that data comes from the census,” she said.

She explained that local councils use census data to decide if a library needs a Vietnamese or Arabic section, or how to support a growing faith community in a regional area.

Melodie Davies, from fka Children’s Services, gave another practical example. Her organisation uses census data to help kindergartens get ready for the children who will walk through their doors.

“We are trying to get kinders ready for families, rather than asking families to be ready for kinder,” she said.

She pointed out that enrolment forms are often hard to fill out even for English speakers, let alone a family from a non-English background. Census data helps services understand who is coming and how to prepare.

The panel also faced some tough questions on privacy and the use of artificial intelligence. Telford said the ABS will use two types of AI. The first is an online chatbot to answer basic questions, but she stressed it is “well contained” and will not learn from public conversations. The second uses machine learning to help process the millions of written answers people give for questions like occupation and industry.

She gave a firm reassurance on data security. “When we receive census forms, the names and addresses get separated out from the rest of the data very early on. At the end of the census, we will destroy that name and address data.”

Another audience member asked about penalties for not completing the census. Telford confirmed that participation is compulsory for almost everyone, except foreign diplomats and people on a short holiday.

“Yes, most people know that participating in the census in Australia is compulsory,” she said. But she added quickly: “It is something we do as an absolute last resort. Our goal is to help people willingly fill in the census.”

She noted that Australia has an incredible participation rate, with over 95 per cent of people willingly taking part last time.

To a question from The Indian Sun on older migrants struggling with technology, Telford said every household gets a letter with instructions, and people can ask for a paper form or go to in-person help centres.

Another audience member asked about counting people in hospitals, aged care homes, or those with dementia. “We have strategies designed to really help all of those vulnerable people be counted,” Telford said, acknowledging that for people with dementia, the ABS relies on the help of family, carers, and staff.

When asked what excites her most about the 2026 data release, Telford said it is impossible to know yet. But she pointed to a stunning fact from the last census.

“Over 50 percent of people who were counted in the 2021 census were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas. That was an incredible moment where we truly got a statistical picture of our diversity.”

The first Australian census was in 1911. The 2026 census will be only the 19th. “It is incredible to see how much as a nation we have changed since that very first census,” Telford said.

For the community leaders, advocates, and ordinary residents in that Melbourne room, the message

> One of the things I’m particularly interested in is the intersection of multicultural and LGBTQIA+, which is often an invisible services
>
> **DR JUDY TANG**

was clear. The census is not just a government exercise. It is a way to prove you are here, to tell your story, and to help build services that actually work for you.

For more info, click here: ***https://info.census.abs.gov.au/help/information-migrants-refugees-and-international-visitors***



Image credit: With woe and with exigence,' from the series In Life, In Death, 2024. Image documentation: Matthew Stanton

Hindi Language Exhibition Tour:

Hayley Millar Baker

Selected Works

Saturday 13 June | 11am | Free

Join us for a Hindi language guided tour of Hayley Millar Baker’s exhibition Selected Works at Wyndham Art Gallery, led by local writer Jasmeet Sahi.

Hayley Millar Baker is a Gunditjmara, Djabwurrung, and Anglo-Indian artist based in the outer western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia.

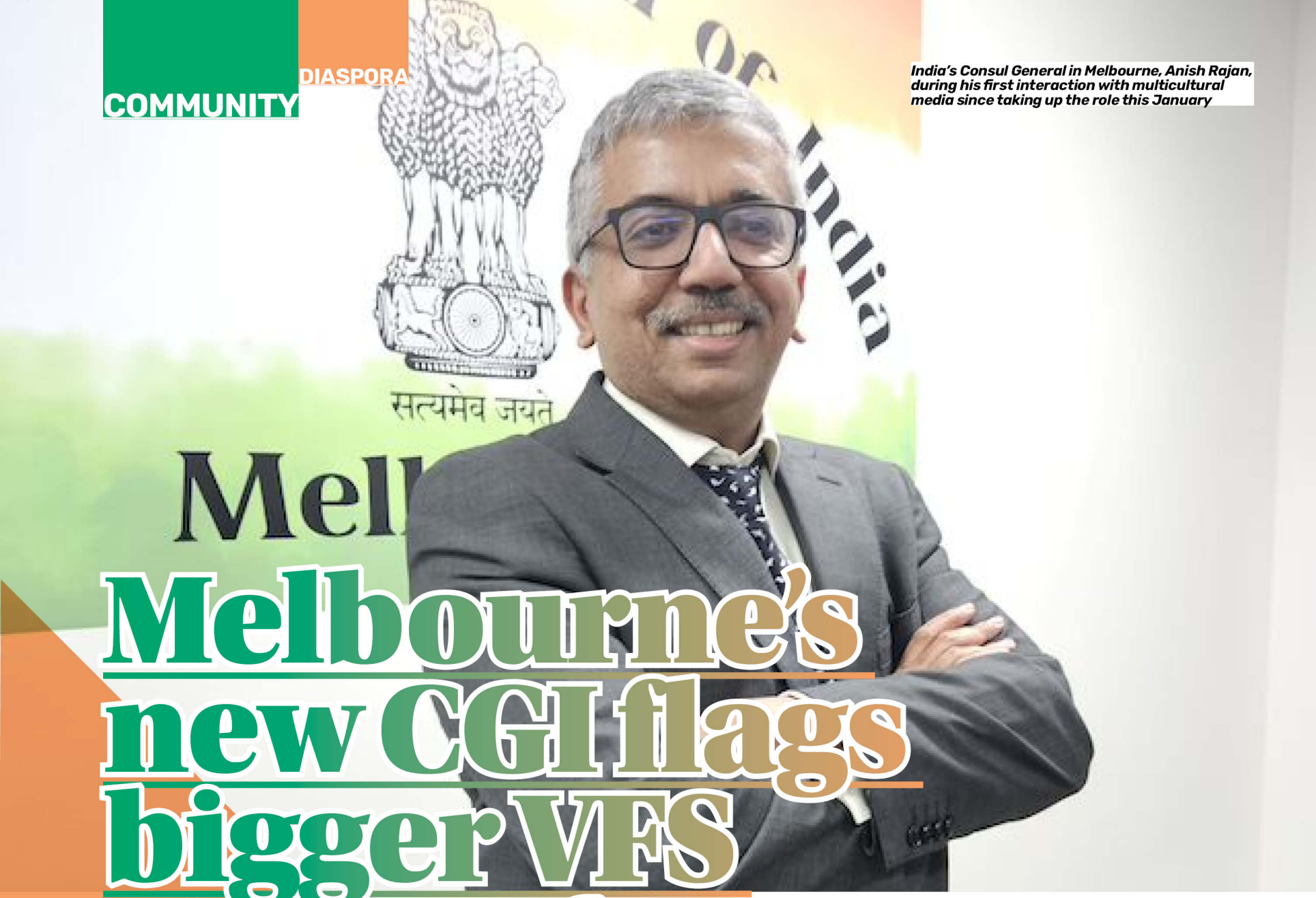
The sixty minute tour offers a welcoming and accessible way for Hindi-speaking audiences to engage with the exhibition, providing insight into the artworks and key themes of this major solo exhibition.

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India's Consul General in Melbourne, Anish Rajan, during his first interaction with multicultural media since taking up the role this January

Melbourne's new CGI flags bigger VFS centre, faster services

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

India's new Consul General in Melbourne, Anish Rajan, has announced that the city's **Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) centre** will move to a larger premises on St Kilda Road, with more counters aimed at reducing long waiting times for visa and OCI services.

Speaking during his first interaction with multicultural media since arriving in Melbourne earlier this year, Rajan said, "We have got a lot of complaints that the VFS office is cramped and doesn't have enough counters. So the new one is going to improve the experience and service of the Indian diaspora and all Australians coming to VFS."

Rajan said the new centre would have 15 counters, a significant increase from the current setup, and was expected to begin functioning in about six weeks.

"More space and more counters mean more services and appointment times coming down, in some cases by more than two months," he said.

The Consul General also acknowledged frustrations around OCI applications and consular websites, saying several systems needed updating. He is planning to add a chatbot and standardise things.

Rajan, who landed in Melbourne on 21 January and recently completed four months in the role, said he had been warmly welcomed by the Indian community.

"I have really enjoyed the hospitality of the people of Melbourne," he said.



He described the Indian diaspora in Victoria as talented and influential, saying the community had an important role to play in strengthening India-Australia ties beyond "cricket and curry".

"Yes, we have to celebrate cricket and curry. Those are strong things that connect the community with the consulate and the larger Australian community," he said.

"But it is also very important to see how we can best use the skills and talent in this diaspora in business, science, technology, sport and culture."

During the interaction, Rajan was also asked about speculation surrounding a possible visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Melbourne in July. While not ruling it out, he stressed that nothing had been officially confirmed yet.

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Karthick Thanigaimani, a CFA volunteer firefighter from Point Cook, stands ready to serve

'Volunteering has given me purpose and connection'

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

National Volunteer Week has brought fresh attention to the quiet network of people who keep communities running behind the scenes, from emergency responders and charity workers to sporting clubs and migrant support groups.

Among them is **Karthick**, a volunteer firefighter with the Country Fire Authority and supporter of the Victoria State Emergency Service, who says the week has been less about celebration and more about recognising the everyday commitment volunteers continue to make across Victoria.

"National Volunteer Week has been a meaningful opportunity to recognise and appreciate the incredible work volunteers do every day in supporting the community," he said.

For Karthick and many others in emergency services, Volunteer Week still looked much like any normal week. Training continued. Emergency call-outs remained part of the routine. Teams gathered for recognition events and morning teas, while volunteers moved between operational work and community engagement.

Australia's volunteer workforce remains one of the country's largest civic networks. According to government and sector estimates, millions of Australians contribute unpaid hours every year across emergency response, healthcare, sports, welfare and local community programs.

"Volunteers spend countless hours training, maintaining equipment, attending fundraising events, supporting education programs and preparing for emergencies ‹TURN TO #16›

> "While we volunteer our time, the level of training, dedication, and responsibility involved is very good and it is pretty much like a career member
>
> **KARTHICK**

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CONTINUED FROM #14 long before major incidents occur"

Emergency services in Victoria continue to rely heavily on volunteers, particularly in outer suburban and regional areas where rapid population growth has increased pressure on frontline services.

Karthick said many people underestimate the level of commitment required from volunteer firefighters.

"One of the biggest misunderstandings is that volunteers are 'part-time' in terms of commitment or responsibility," he said.

"While we volunteer our time, the level of training, dedication, and responsibility involved is very good and it is pretty much like a career member."

He said volunteers spend countless hours training, maintaining equipment, attending fundraising events, supporting education programs and preparing for emergencies long before major incidents occur.

That commitment has become increasingly visible in Melbourne's west, where migrant communities are taking a larger role in volunteering and emergency response.

Karthick said multicultural participation had strengthened local organisations by bringing language skills, broader community connections and greater trust during emergencies.

"We are seeing more volunteers from migrant and multicultural backgrounds stepping forward, getting trained, and actively participating in emergency response and community support," he said.

He said the shift was particularly important in rapidly growing suburbs such as Point Cook and Werribee, where culturally diverse communities often benefit from clearer communication and familiar faces during emergencies.

Volunteer organisations across Australia have also faced recruitment pressures in recent years following the COVID-19 pandemic, although Karthick said participation remained steady overall in many areas.

Beyond statistics and unpaid labour estimates, he believes volunteering creates something harder to measure.

"Volunteering has given me a strong sense of purpose, responsibility, and connection to the community," he said.

"What keeps me attached to volunteering is the people. The bonds formed with fellow volunteers, the trust built within the community, and the shared commitment to helping others create a strong sense of belonging."

As Volunteer Week events continue across the country, Karthick said younger Australians should not underestimate the value of giving even a small amount of time to community service.

"If you are willing to get involved, you will always find supportive teams, involvement, and opportunities to grow in ways you may not expect," he said.

> We are seeing more volunteers from migrant and multicultural backgrounds stepping forward, getting trained, and actively participating in emergency response



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John Mooney OAM PSM with Gabrielle Williams MP during the Victorian Recognition of Service awards honouring long-serving teachers and education staff. Photo/Facebook

60 years in the classroom: Victorian education veteran honoured



OUR REPORTER
𝕏 @the_indian_sun

A teacher who began working in Victoria's public education system in 1966 has been recognised for six decades of service as the Allan Government honoured more than 300 long-serving school staff across the state.

Deputy Premier and Education Minister Ben Carroll congratulated 307 teachers and support staff during the annual Recognition of Service awards, which acknowledged employees who had completed 40, 45, 50, 55 and 60 years in Victorian public education.

Among those recognised was John Mooney OAM PSM, Principal of Emerson School, who has spent 60 years working in education.

John has served as principal of Emerson School, a specialist school in Melbourne's south-east, for 29 years. He also previously led specialist schools in Frankston and Ashwood. He received the Public Service Medal in 2014 for his work supporting students with disabilities and was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 2020.

"Today, we say thank you to those teachers and education support staff who have taught generations of young learners," Mr Carroll said.

"Whenever I speak with our hard-working teachers, I'm struck by their dedication to making sure our children thrive."

"I'm proud that Labor has made Victorian teachers the best paid in the nation—because they're the best in the nation."

The event also highlighted schools where multiple staff members were recognised for long service.

Balwyn High School had recipients recognised for 40, 45 and 50 years of service, while Bendigo Senior Secondary College recorded recipients across the same milestones.

Glen Waverley Secondary College had three staff members honoured for 40 years of service and another for 50 years, while Haddon Primary School had two staff members recognised for 45 years.

Greater Shepparton Secondary College and Portland Primary School each had staff members recognised for both 40 and 50 years of service.

The recognition event came days after the Victorian Government announced a new agreement aimed at making Victorian teachers the highest paid in the country.

The government also used the occasion to criticise Opposition education policies, with Mr Carroll claiming proposed cuts from the Liberals would affect schools and teachers across the state.

Meanwhile, Gabrielle Williams paid tribute to Mr Mooney in a public message marking his six decades in education.

"For 60 years, John Mooney has changed lives through compassion, leadership and an unwavering belief in young people," she said.

"Many will know him as the Principal of Emerson School but the truth is, John's impact reaches far beyond the classroom—he has challenged systems when they have needed challenging, and he's mentored and encouraged others, across generations. An incredible leader, and an incredible 60 years of service."

Bharatanatyam and Bibi Ji: Mother's Day, two ways

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

This Mother's Day, on 10 May, two members of Melbourne's Indian community offered distinct ways to celebrate: an evening of classical Bharatanatyam and a special menu rooted in family tradition, each paying tribute to mothers in their own way.

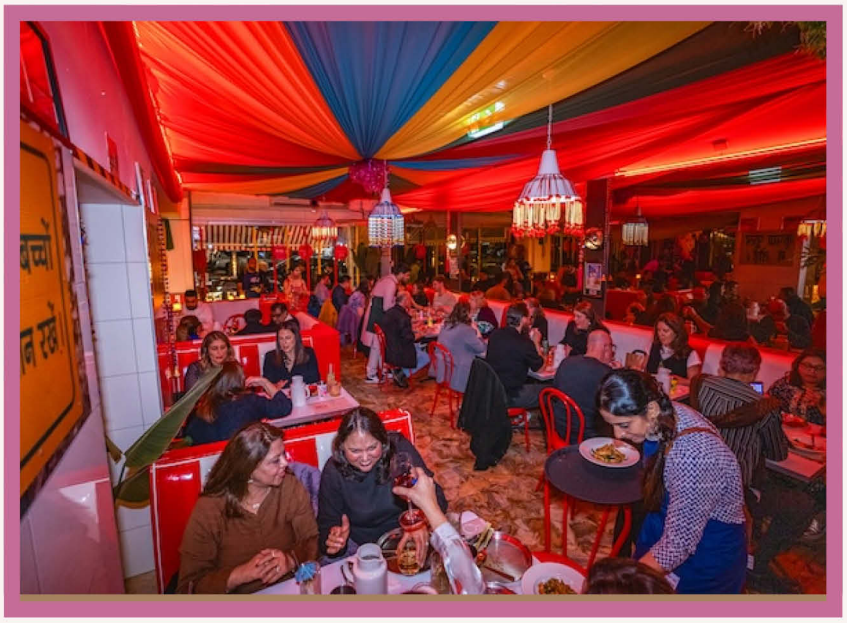
At Doncaster Secondary College, Nadana Maalai saw Bharatanatyam dancer Lalitha Narayanan perform alongside Lakshmi Narayanan, founder of a sister academy in Bengaluru. The event was a collaboration between Nrithyopasana School of Bharatanatyam in Melbourne and Nrithyopasana Academy of Indian Dances in India, and featured students and musicians from both countries.

The evening brought together performers across generations, with classical dance used as a medium to express themes of devotion, strength and continuity — ideas closely associated with motherhood.



Bharatanatyam dancers Lalitha Narayanan and her sister Lakshmi Narayanan will lead a Mother's Day performance in Melbourne // Photo supplied

"Bibi Ji" is a Punjabi term used for a mother or grandmother, and the restaurant draws on that idea of food



Meanwhile, at Bibi Ji restaurant, 179 Lygon St, Carlton, chef and owner Amarjeet Singh marked the day with a special set menu inspired by family recipes passed down through generations.

"Bibi Ji" is a Punjabi term used for a mother or grandmother, and the restaurant draws on that idea of food as care and connection.

"I learnt cooking from my mother, and she learnt it from hers," Amarjeet said. "For me, food has always been more than just a meal. It is the love a mother puts into every dish."

The restaurant offered a $69 set lunch and dinner menu for Mother's Day, designed as a gesture of appreciation for mothers in the community.

While different in form, both events reflected a shared thread — the passing down of tradition, whether through art or food.

For many families, Mother's Day is marked in quiet ways. Last weekend, Melbourne's Indian community chose to do so through performance, memory and a shared meal.



Ronaldo Laishram, who helped discover the Loktak Protocluster // Photo supplied

Indian astrophysicist names galaxy cluster after Manipur's Loktak Lake

INDIRA LAISRAM
𝕏 @indira_laisram

Tokyo-based astrophysicist **Ronaldo Laishram** has helped uncover one of the earliest known giant structures in the Universe and named it after a lake from his home state of Manipur, India.

Laishram, who grew up in Khangabok in Manipur's Thoubal district, led an international team that discovered what is now known as the "Loktak Protocluster", a massive gathering of young galaxies that existed around 12.6 billion years ago, when the Universe itself was only about 1.2 billion years old.

The discovery, made using the Subaru Telescope in Hawaii and NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, is now reshaping how scientists understand the early Universe.

What Laishram and his team of researchers found was unexpected.



Ronaldo Laishram with former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam after being recognised for discovering an asteroid at the age of 18 // Photo supplied

Galaxies inside the crowded protocluster appeared physically larger than similar galaxies growing in emptier regions of space. Both groups were forming new stars at similar rates, but the galaxies inside the dense cosmic environment already possessed larger outer stellar structures associated with older stars.

In simple terms, where a galaxy "grew up" seemed to matter, even in the infancy of the Universe.

> The discovery, made using the Subaru Telescope in Hawaii and NASA's James Webb Space Telescope

The findings challenge older assumptions that early galaxies evolved mainly because of their own internal properties such as mass or gas content. Instead, the study suggests the surrounding cosmic environment may have begun shaping galaxy growth far earlier than scientists previously believed.

The researchers say the discovery could help explain how some of the Universe's largest cosmic structures emerged over billions 〈TURN TO #21〉

CONTINUED FROM #20 of years.

The protocluster stretches across an enormous region of space and contains four distinct concentrations of galaxies linked together into one larger system.

For Laishram, that structure immediately reminded him of the phumdis — the floating circular islands of Loktak Lake.

"Loktak is not just a lake to us. It is the mirror and lifeline of Manipur," he told The Indian Sun. "Growing up in Manipur, it was always there in our stories, our food, our identity."

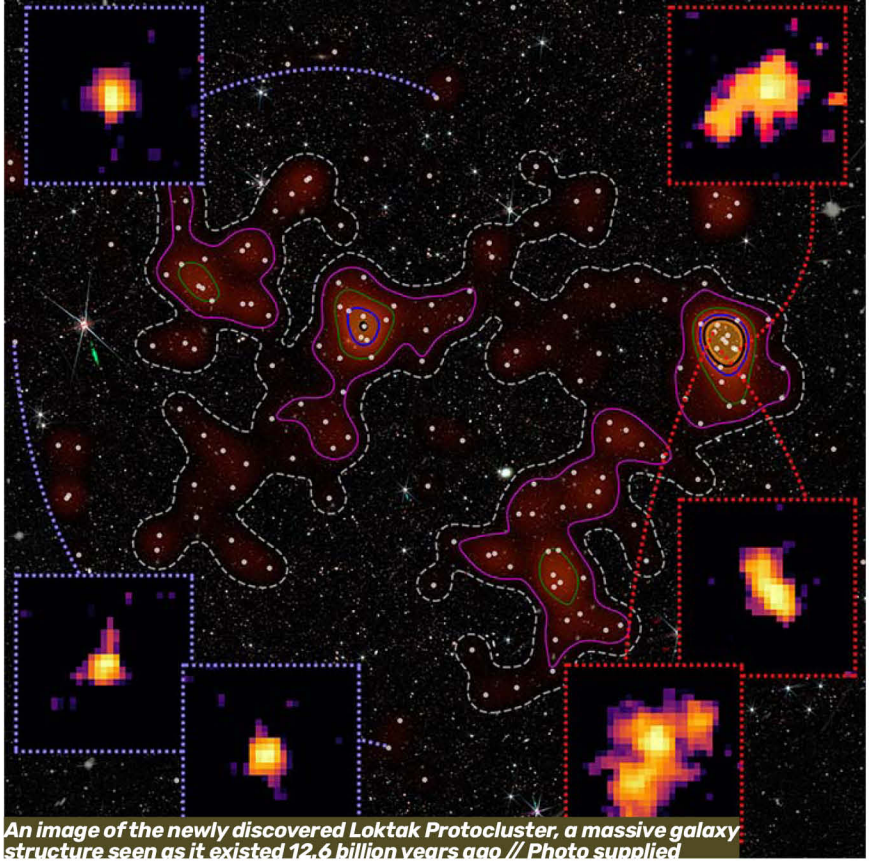
"When I discovered this protocluster, I always wanted to name something after my home Manipur," he said. "And when I saw four separate concentrations of galaxies all linked together into one larger system, I immediately thought of Loktak."

"The floating islands within one connected body of water. It was the most natural name I could give it."

But for Laishram, the naming carried a meaning beyond science.

"Manipur is a place that often goes unheard," he said. "It carries so much beauty, so much struggle, so much history that the world rarely sees."

"I wanted to do something that placed Manipur not just on a map, but in the story of the Universe itself. That for me is the meaning of it. Loktak will now echo in scientific literature, in astronomy journals, in the cosmos, forever. And that feels like the greatest tribute I could offer to home."



An image of the newly discovered Loktak Protocluster, a massive galaxy structure seen as it existed 12.6 billion years ago // Photo supplied



Loktak Lake in Manipur, whose floating phumdis inspired the name of the newly discovered "Loktak Protocluster", a giant galaxy structure dating back 12.6 billion years // Photo supplied

The findings were published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters. Researchers caution that more protoclusters need to be studied before scientists can determine whether this environmental effect is universal across the early cosmos or unique to this particular structure.

For Laishram, the discovery is another remarkable milestone in a journey that began long before Tokyo and giant telescopes.

At 18, he discovered an asteroid and was honoured by former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. Today, alongside his research, he also runs the Manipur Astronomical Society to encourage young people in the state to engage with astronomy and space science.

Not bad, perhaps, for a boy from Khangabok who grew up looking at the night sky over Manipur and has now ensured that the name "Loktak" will travel across the Universe for generations to come.





ECCV engages with community members at a forum, gathering insights on local needs and priorities ahead of the Victorian state election

Multicultural and Aboriginal groups welcome Budget support, call for deeper investment

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Community organisations have responded to the Victorian Budget 2026–27 with a mix of support for targeted funding and calls for sustained investment, particularly for multicultural and Aboriginal-led programs.

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria said the Budget includes practical measures that will assist migrant and refugee communities facing cost pressures, while urging political parties to commit to longer-term funding ahead of the state election.

ECCV pointed to initiatives such as subsidised public transport, fuel price caps and vehicle registration discounts as measures that will benefit multicultural Victorians. It also highlighted funding directed at community programs, including $3.4 million for anti-racism initiatives, $3.4 million to support people seeking asylum, and $61.9 million for English as an Additional Language programs in schools.

ECCV CEO Farah Farouque said further investment is needed beyond the current allocations. "It's good to see several practical measures in the Budget, but beyond that we really need to see greater investment in multicultural organisations that do so much to support **<TURN TO #23>**

> It's good to see several practical measures in the Budget, but beyond that we really need to see greater investment in multicultural organisations that do so much to support communities. We hope to see this addressed as we head into the state election
>
> **FARAH FAROUQUE, CEO– ECCV**

❮CONTINUED FROM #22❯
communities. We hope to see this addressed as we head into the state election."

She also welcomed continued support for seniors' groups. "I'm also pleased to see an additional two years of funding for grassroots seniors' clubs, which play a vital role in supporting connection and wellbeing. ECCV has long advocated for an ongoing investment in ethnic seniors' clubs."

ECCV Chair Silvia Renda said multicultural communities should remain central to future policy commitments. "As Victoria heads toward a state election, multicultural communities must be central to the commitments of all political parties."

She added that sustained support is essential for ongoing programs. "This Budget includes welcome measures, but they must be matched by sustained investment in the organisations and services that support culturally diverse communities every day."

The organisation said additional funding will be required to maintain programs in the years ahead, particularly given ongoing cost pressures and barriers faced by culturally diverse communities.

Separately, the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency welcomed aspects of the Budget but raised concerns about the scale of investment in Aboriginal-led initiatives.

VACCA noted continued funding for existing programs, including the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program, which supports the transfer of responsibility for children on protection orders to Aboriginal organisations. It also acknowledged measures such as the expansion of Community Protecting Boorais and funding linked to the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Acting Deputy CEO Megan Van Den Berg said a shift in funding approach is needed to improve outcomes. "For VACCA to continue to deliver life-changing, holistic and integrated programs that close the gap, a complete reimagining of funding models is required. We know that Aboriginal-led and designed programs do achieve the best outcomes in our communities."

She said access to services depends on sustained funding across multiple sectors. "Timely access to services and supports—in child and family services; family violence prevention, response and healing; education; homelessness prevention; and crime prevention and community safety—can only be achieved with appropriate funding."


ECCV CEO Farah Farouque

VACCA also raised concerns that existing allocations remain weighted towards mainstream systems, warning that stronger investment in Aboriginal-led prevention and early intervention is needed to meet Closing the Gap targets.

Both organisations said the Budget includes measures that will assist communities in the short term, while signalling that further funding and policy focus will be required as Victoria moves toward the state election.





Representational Photo by Maximillian Conacher on Unsplash

'Implicitly racist': Housing-linked migration rhetoric draws warning

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Comments by Race Discrimination Commissioner **Giridharan Sivaraman** often shape the national conversation on migration and identity. Speaking at a panel discussion in Brisbane, he turned to housing and migration, describing aspects of the current debate as "implicitly racist".

Mr Sivaraman made the remarks during a panel discussion at a human rights seminar in Brisbane, where he said recent political messaging risks targeting migrant communities.

"On one side of that fault line you have two parties, a populist party and now the federal opposition, who are dehumanising, scapegoating migrants," he said.

He said migrants were being blamed for a wide range of issues, including housing shortages and cost pressures.

Together, they encouraged people to blame migrants for everything from the housing crisis and traffic to the cost of milk, he said.

"That is implicitly racist, because ... the only signal as to whether someone is a migrant usually is the colour of their skin, or their name, or their accent, and it draws on this deep vein of racism that's always existed from the time of colonisation," he said.

"This notion that some people belong here more than others or some people are superior to others."

The comments come as housing remains a central issue in the national debate, with Opposition leader Angus Taylor proposing to reduce migration levels and link intake more closely to housing supply.

"This is about mass migration running ahead of the homes, roads, hospitals, schools and services Australia can provide," Mr Taylor said in his budget reply speech.

Mr Sivaraman said he expected the tone of the debate to intensify in the coming years.

He said that 〈TURN TO #25〉

> On one side of that fault line you have two parties, a populist party and now the federal opposition, who are dehumanising, scapegoating migrants
>
> **GIRIDHARAN SIVARAMAN**

CONTINUED FROM #24 over the next two years, he anticipated an escalation in "the racism that accompanies" blaming immigrants, describing it as a "significant issue" for his work.

The discussion has drawn attention within multicultural communities, including the Indian diaspora, which continues to grow in major metropolitan areas and remains closely tied to housing and workforce trends.

Mr Taylor rejected the characterisation, saying migration remains important to Australia while arguing current settings are unsustainable.

"We think migration is incredibly important to this country. It always has been and it always will be," he said.

"But the numbers have been too high and standards to low. The numbers got up to 550,000 in a year and housing construction was going backwards."

He said housing affordability pressures were linked to population growth outpacing supply.

"It's no wonder young Australians can't get into a home," Mr Taylor said.

The exchange reflects a broader shift in the migration debate, where housing, infrastructure and cost of living pressures are increasingly being linked to population policy.

Mr Sivaraman said addressing those concerns required a different approach.

"The only way we'll actually deal with that—I think that racism, effectively—is to build class solidarity … between black, brown, and white people," he said.

"Because until you can convince a white worker that it's in their interest to combat racism—that racism is actually one of the causes of their inequity—you're not going to build solidarity".



Giridharan Sivaraman





Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan with participants at the inaugural Youth Leadership Roundtable in Melbourne, hosted by the Australia India Business Council in collaboration with Indian Youth Association Victoria Inc // Photo supplied

Allan chairs youth roundtable on jobs, housing and AI

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun



Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan chaired an inaugural **Youth Leadership Roundtable** in Melbourne this week, bringing together young professionals, business representatives and community leaders to discuss housing, employment and the future impact of artificial intelligence on the workforce.

The event was hosted by Kushagra Nigam from the Australia India Business Council in collaboration with Indian Youth Association Victoria Inc.

Discussions focused on issues shaping Victoria's economic and social outlook, including housing affordability, entrepreneurship, workforce participation and education pathways.

Participants also discussed how emerging technologies and digital transformation **<TURN TO #27>**



Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan with Kushagra Nigam from the AIBC

<CONTINUED FROM #26> are changing workforce demands across industries, with attention placed on skills training and education systems as drivers of long-term economic growth.

The roundtable included conversations around opportunities and pressures facing multicultural communities and younger professionals in Victoria, alongside the role of youth participation in policy discussions and planning.

Technical and Further Education institutions were also discussed during the session, particularly Victoria's growing role in international and transnational education. Stakeholders said the state's TAFE sector could expand its international reach through stronger global partnerships and skills-based training programs.

Organisers said the event aimed to strengthen engagement between government, industry and emerging leaders while supporting Victoria's position in education, innovation and multicultural participation.

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VICTORIA State Government

VICTORIA POLICE



The Indian Ocean is central to our security and prosperity: Penny Wong. File photo

Four Democracies, One Nervous Ocean

A Delhi meeting showed the **Quad** trying to turn regional anxiety into practical power, with India increasingly central to how Australia and its partners read the Indo-Pacific

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Foreign ministers from Australia, India, Japan and the United States met in New Delhi on 26 May with a practical agenda: maritime security, energy resilience, critical minerals, Pacific infrastructure and the future balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

The meeting brought together Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The tone was direct. The four countries sought to present the Quad as a working partnership rather than a diplomatic talking shop. The announcements were aimed at the practical pressures now facing the region: contested sea lanes, supply chain risk, energy disruption, illegal fishing, cyber threats and the growing need for infrastructure in the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

Jaishankar said the meeting had focused on the Indo-Pacific because the four countries were "maritime democracies located at different ends" of the region. He said maritime cooperation had expanded into surveillance, domain awareness, logistics, undersea cables, training, capacity building and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

"We spent some time on the question of safe and unimpeded maritime commerce and reaffirmed the significance of scrupulously observing international law," Jaishankar said.

The meeting came at a time of rising pressure on global shipping and energy markets. Tensions around the Strait of Hormuz were raised during the talks, with Wong warning that instability there had consequences for the Indo-Pacific despite the strait sitting outside the region's immediate geography.

"We know the consequences for our region of the Iranian closure of the Strait of Hormuz and what that means for our energy security, for our economies, and for our people," Wong said.

The ministers announced a Quad energy security initiative aimed at improving regional resilience. Critical minerals were also high on the agenda, with the four countries seeking to reduce dependence on concentrated supply chains for materials used in batteries, electric vehicles, solar panels, defence systems and advanced manufacturing.

Rubio said the Quad would announce a Critical Minerals Framework to help coordinate investment and strengthen supply chains covering mining, processing and recycling. **<TURN TO #29>**

CONTINUED FROM #28

The issue is especially relevant to Australia, which holds large reserves of lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earths. India, meanwhile, is seeking secure inputs for manufacturing, energy transition and industrial growth. Japan brings deep industrial capacity, while the United States remains central to finance, technology and security coordination.

Wong said secure supply chains had become a condition for wider stability.

"We understand that secure and reliable supply chains are a precondition to economic and strategic stability," she said.

The Quad also announced the Ports of the Future Partnership, beginning with a pilot port infrastructure project in Fiji. Wong said the project was intended to respond to priorities identified by the Pacific rather than imposed from outside.

"It's a practical demonstration of our collective ability to deliver high quality, resilient infrastructure in partnership with the region and in response to Pacific priorities," she said.

The Fiji project is modest in scale when compared with the size of regional infrastructure needs, but its strategic meaning is larger. Ports across the Pacific and Indian Ocean are now central to trade, naval access, disaster response and supply chains. They have also become part of the broader contest for influence among major powers.

The Quad's TURN TO #30

Jaishankar said the meeting had focused on the Indo-Pacific because the four countries were "maritime democracies located at different ends" of the region



Quad foreign ministers gather in New Delhi following high-level talks focused on Indo-Pacific security, maritime cooperation, critical minerals and regional infrastructure partnerships. From left: Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong, India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Photo/X

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CONTINUED FROM #29 message was that it wants to offer countries in the region more choices. Wong said this was central to how Australia views the grouping.

"That means a country should be able to make sovereign choices about who they are and what they want, and so if the Quad can deliver those choices or those options, then we should do so," she said.

This was also a clear attempt to answer criticism that the Quad is aimed primarily at China. Wong rejected that framing during a press conference, saying the grouping was focused on stability rather than confrontation.

"We are for peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, and that's what we're acting to deliver," she said.

Even so, China's presence sat behind much of the discussion. The Quad's focus on maritime surveillance, ports, undersea cables, critical minerals and trusted supply chains overlaps with areas where Beijing's reach has grown in recent years. Officials avoided direct confrontation in their public language, but the strategic context was clear.

The maritime announcements were among the most concrete outcomes. Rubio said the Quad would launch the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration Initiative, designed to use the four countries' surveillance capabilities to improve information sharing.

He also announced an expansion of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness Initiative, which provides near real-time commercial maritime tracking data to countries across the region.

"The reason why maritime security is so important, beyond the fact that current events remind us of what can happen when maritime security is impeded, is the fact that 60 percent of global maritime trade passes through the Indo-Pacific," Rubio said.

For smaller countries in the region, the value of such systems may be immediate. Many Pacific and Indian Ocean states have vast maritime zones but limited capacity to monitor illegal fishing, trafficking or suspicious vessel activity. Better domain awareness can help with law enforcement, disaster response and sovereignty.

Wong said the expanded system would help partners access near real-time unclassified satellite tracking data to combat illegal fishing and trafficking, while also improving humanitarian disaster response.

"It is a way of ensuring we know who is in our maritime domain, and what we need to do about it," she said.

The Quad is not a military alliance. There is no treaty obligation and no single command structure. Its members have different histories, interests and foreign policy habits. India, in particular, has long guarded its strategic autonomy and remains cautious about being drawn into formal alliance structures.

That is one reason New Delhi's role matters so much. Without India, the Quad could be dismissed more easily as a US-led grouping of allies. With India, it carries wider regional weight. India is the world's largest democracy, one of the fastest-growing major economies and a country with deep ties across the global south.

Jaishankar's remarks reflected that position. He spoke of partnerships, economic resilience, secure technologies and production capacity, while also stressing international law and the right of countries to defend themselves against terrorism.

"There must be zero tolerance for terrorism and nations subject to terrorist attacks have the right to defend themselves," he said.

The meeting also showed how Australia is placing India more firmly at the centre of its regional strategy. Wong described the bilateral relationship as closer and more consequential than ever, built on "strategic trust" and a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.



Without India, the Quad could be dismissed more easily as a US-led grouping of allies. With India, it carries wider regional weight

She also linked the strategic relationship to the Indian-Australian community.

"The heart of our partnership is our people, and around a million Australians trace their heritage to India," Wong said.

"They are such an important community for us, such an important part of our multicultural fabric."

That line matters for Australia. The Indian diaspora is now one of the strongest links between the two countries, shaping education, migration, business and politics. Indian students, skilled workers, entrepreneurs and families have made the relationship less abstract and more domestic.

The economic relationship is also widening. India TURN TO #31

CONTINUED FROM #30 supplies refined fuel used in Australian mining, energy and agriculture. Australia supplies coal and iron ore that support India's Make in India program. Both sides continue talks on moving from the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement to a broader Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.

Jaishankar said the two countries were also discussing energy trade, uranium supplies, critical minerals, defence exchanges, maritime cooperation, space cooperation and sport.

The New Delhi meeting therefore had two layers. The first was the Quad's broad regional agenda. The second was the Australia-India relationship, which has become one of the key bilateral pillars inside that arrangement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Australia in the near future, with Wong saying Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was looking forward to welcoming him. Such a visit would give both sides another opportunity to push trade, education, migration, energy and defence cooperation.

For the Quad, the next test is delivery. Regional countries have heard many promises from major powers. What they will watch now is whether ports are built, surveillance systems work, supply chains become more reliable and energy cooperation produces tangible benefits.

Rubio said the grouping was trying to move beyond meetings and statements.

"We wanted this gathering, this partnership to be more than just a place where we got together every now and then and discussed the problems of the world that we held in common, but a form of action," he said.

That ambition is clear. The difficulty is execution.

The Indo-Pacific is now the main theatre for global trade, strategic competition and technological dependence. Its sea lanes carry goods, fuel, data and political risk. Its smaller states are seeking investment without dependency, security without subordination and development without being forced into another country's strategic camp.

The Quad says it wants to help provide those choices. The meeting in New Delhi on 26 May showed a grouping trying to become more practical and more relevant. Its challenge now is simple: it must prove that four democracies with different instincts can act together quickly enough to matter.



Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong meets India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in New Delhi ahead of the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, as Australia and India deepen cooperation on trade, security, critical minerals and Indo-Pacific stability. Photo: Facebook / Ministry of External Affairs, India

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Tamil Association of Queensland marks 40 years of cultural connection

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The Tamil Association of Queensland (TAQ) has marked four decades of community service, cultural preservation and social connection, celebrating a journey that reflects the growth of Queensland's Tamil community and its contribution to the state's multicultural fabric.

Founded in 1986, the association has grown from a small community initiative into one of Queensland's longstanding multicultural organisations. Over the past 40 years, it has provided support and a sense of belonging for Tamil families, students, professionals and migrants from countries including India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa who have settled in Australia.

The association traces its origins to efforts by Tamil community leaders in the late 〈TURN TO #33〉

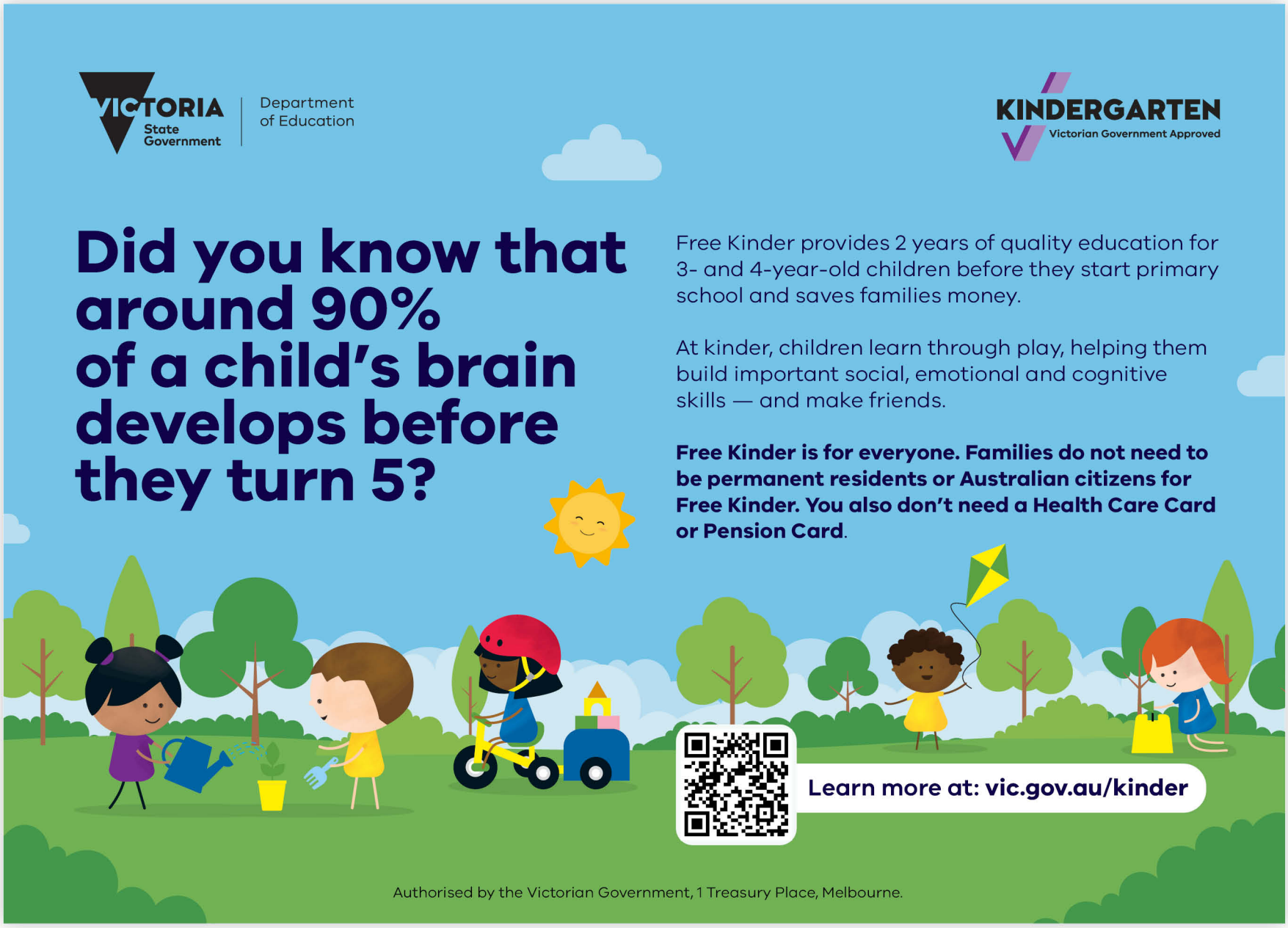




CONTINUED FROM #32 1970s who worked to support migrants and refugees arriving in Australia. Formal foundations were laid in 1984 when community members came together with a shared goal of preserving Tamil language, culture and traditions while helping families establish new lives in Queensland. Early meetings were held at the Migrant Resource Centre in West End, with newsletters and community gatherings helping strengthen connections among members.

Over the years, TAQ has organised a wide range of programs covering culture, education, sport, community awareness and social welfare. Its activities have included youth initiatives, women's programs, cultural festivals and community events that have attracted participation from both the Tamil community and the wider public.

Events such as Deepavali celebrations, Pongal festivals, Australia Day programs and cultural showcases have become regular fixtures on the community calendar, TURN TO #34













CONTINUED FROM #33 bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

The association's 40th anniversary celebrations culminated in a major cultural event at the Royal International Convention Centre in Brisbane on 10 May. The program featured traditional Tamil performances, including Parai Isai, Karagaattam and folk arts, alongside music and cultural presentations highlighting the heritage of the Tamil community.

The event also welcomed several artists and performers from India, including playback singers Senthil Ganesh, Rajalakshmi Senthil Ganesh and Sangeetha Rajeshwaran, as well as Padma Shri recipient Velu Aasaan, Kalaimamani awardee T. Govindaraj, Guinness World Record holder Anushya Sree and singer Nikhil Mathew.

TAQ President Karthick Elangovan said the anniversary represented an opportunity to reflect on the efforts of generations of volunteers, leaders and community members who helped shape the organisation.

He described the association as a place where language, culture and traditions continue to be shared across generations, while acknowledging the contributions of founding members, past presidents, volunteers, sponsors and supporters.

A feature of the celebrations was a Mother's Day gathering that brought together founding members and past leaders of the organisation. The event recognised the role families, particularly mothers and community pioneers, have played in building and sustaining the Tamil community in Queensland.

For the first time in the association's history, former presidents were invited onto the same stage, highlighting the continuity of leadership across four decades. Organisers said the moment reflected the collective effort that has guided the association through its development and growth.

TAQ also acknowledged support received over the years from government agencies, local councils, multicultural organisations, sponsors and community partners.

Looking ahead, the association plans to continue its focus on youth engagement, women's leadership, cultural preservation and community inclusion. Organisers say these priorities will help ensure future generations remain connected to their heritage while contributing to Queensland's diverse and evolving community life.

As TAQ enters its fifth decade, the organisation says it remains committed to fostering cultural understanding, community participation and opportunities for future generations.



Members of the Sri Guru Nanak Darbar community take part in tree planting during the 2025 World Environment Day event in Officer, where volunteers planted fruit, flower and herb trees as part of ongoing sustainability and environmental awareness efforts. Photo/Facebook

Gurdwara event to focus on sustainable living for World Environment Day

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Members of the community will gather in Melbourne's west next month for a World Environment Day event aimed at encouraging practical conversations around sustainable living and environmental responsibility.

The programme, organised by **Sri Guru Nanak Darbar**, will take place on 6 June at the gurdwara on Officer Road in Officer. Organisers say the afternoon will focus on everyday actions people can take to reduce waste, conserve resources and make environmentally conscious choices at home and within the wider community.

The event will include discussions on sustainable living, community participation and environmental awareness, alongside plantation activities and networking opportunities. Lunch, tea and coffee will also be provided for attendees.

Promotional material for the gathering highlights themes such as lowering household costs through sustainable habits and reducing environmental pressure for future generations. Organisers are encouraging people from all backgrounds to attend, with an emphasis on shared learning and community engagement.

Faith organisations across Australia have increasingly become involved in environmental campaigns in recent years, often linking climate awareness with community service and social responsibility. Sikh groups in particular have supported tree planting drives, food relief efforts and sustainability initiatives tied to Sikh teachings on equality, service and care for the environment.

Environmental advocates have welcomed grassroots events that encourage public participation, though many also point out that broader structural action from governments and industry remains central to addressing climate and sustainability challenges.

World Environment Day, led globally by the United Nations Environment Programme, is observed annually on 5 June and is intended to encourage awareness and action on environmental issues worldwide.



Swastika Ganguly and Anirban Datta with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon during a multicultural community gathering in Auckland. Photo suplied

Macbeth in Kashmir: Melbourne cineplay reimagines Shakespeare

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

A Melbourne-based cultural collective is preparing to launch what it describes as one of the first South Asian Shakespeare adaptations in cineplay format produced locally, transporting *Macbeth* from medieval Scotland to the mountains of Kashmir during the 1999 Kargil conflict.

The English-language cineplay, titled *Kashmir*, will premiere globally on YouTube and Facebook this Friday 29 May, through Melbourne-based cultural organisation Euphoria Entertainment. The work has been developed by Anirban Dattaand written by Swastika Ganguly.

Speaking to *The Indian Sun* ahead of the 〈TURN TO #37〉



Swastika Ganguly receiving the Excellence in Culture Award (2022–2023) presented by Indian Newslink, one of New Zealand's leading Indian community newspapers, in recognition of her contributions to arts and culture. Photo supplied

CONTINUED FROM #36 launch, Ganguly said the adaptation emerged from the thematic overlap between Shakespeare's tragedy and the moral ambiguities of war.

"Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Kargil War may seem completely unrelated at first, one is a tragic play about power and ambition, the other a real military conflict," she said. "But thematically, there are striking parallels that can be explored in literature, political analysis, or dramatic adaptation."

The story relocates Macbeth's psychological collapse into the volatile backdrop of Kashmir during the Kargil conflict, where ambition, paranoia and violence begin feeding into one another. Ganguly said the production examines how the pursuit of power can lead individuals and nations beyond moral and strategic limits.

"In *Macbeth*, Macbeth's ambition pushes him beyond moral and strategic limits. He attempts to seize and hold power through risky actions," she said.



Swastika Ganguly. Photo: Facebook

> "The icy mountains of Kargil could even symbolically resemble the bleak atmosphere of Shakespearean tragedy"
>
> **SWASTIKA GANGULY**

"Similarly, many analysts describe the Kargil infiltration as a strategic overreach, a high-risk operation based on assumptions of surprise and limited escalation, underestimating long-term consequences. In both cases, short-term tactical success led to larger strategic failure."

The adaptation also explores psychological strain and uncertainty, themes Ganguly believes resonate strongly across both Shakespearean tragedy and modern warfare.

"A major theme in *Macbeth* is internal torment: paranoia, guilt, fear, sleeplessness," she said.

"The Kargil conflict also carried enormous psychological strain, soldiers fighting in extreme conditions, political pressure, uncertainty of escalation between nuclear powers. Both involve battles not only on physical ground but within the human mind."

Ganguly said one line from Macbeth particularly captured the atmosphere the creators hoped to portray.

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair," she said, quoting the play. "It captures the ambiguity and confusion common in wartime situations."

The production arrives amid growing experimentation within Melbourne's multicultural arts community, where independent groups are increasingly combining theatre, cinema and online distribution to reach broader audiences.

Rather than staging the story as a traditional live play, Euphoria Entertainment opted for a "cineplay" format, blending theatrical performance with cinematic techniques including edited sequences, location filming, close-ups and sound design.

"A cineplay sits somewhere between cinema and traditional theatre," Ganguly explained. "Instead of experiencing a story only live on stage, a cineplay uses cinematic techniques while still retaining the emotional intensity and performance style of theatre."

She said the format allowed the production to move beyond the limitations of conventional stage design.

"Traditional theatre depends heavily on stage limitations," she said. "Cineplay allows outdoor locations, flashbacks, dream sequences, intimate close-ups, visual symbolism and cinematic pacing. This makes storytelling more immersive."

The decision to release the work digitally was also deliberate.

"A stage play is limited by venue size and geography. A cineplay can be streamed, screened internationally, or distributed online, reaching audiences far beyond one auditorium," she said.

Ganguly noted that hybrid storytelling formats have accelerated globally since the pandemic, with many theatre groups shifting toward filmed theatre, cinematic theatre and multimedia productions.

"This became especially prominent after the COVID era when digital accessibility became essential," she said.

While the production draws heavily from political and historical tensions surrounding Kashmir, Ganguly said the central focus remains human cost.

"Both stories ultimately focus on human cost," she said. "In *Macbeth*, innocent lives are destroyed and ambition devastates society. In Kargil, soldiers died in brutal high-altitude combat, families and communities carried lasting trauma, geopolitical rivalry came at human cost."

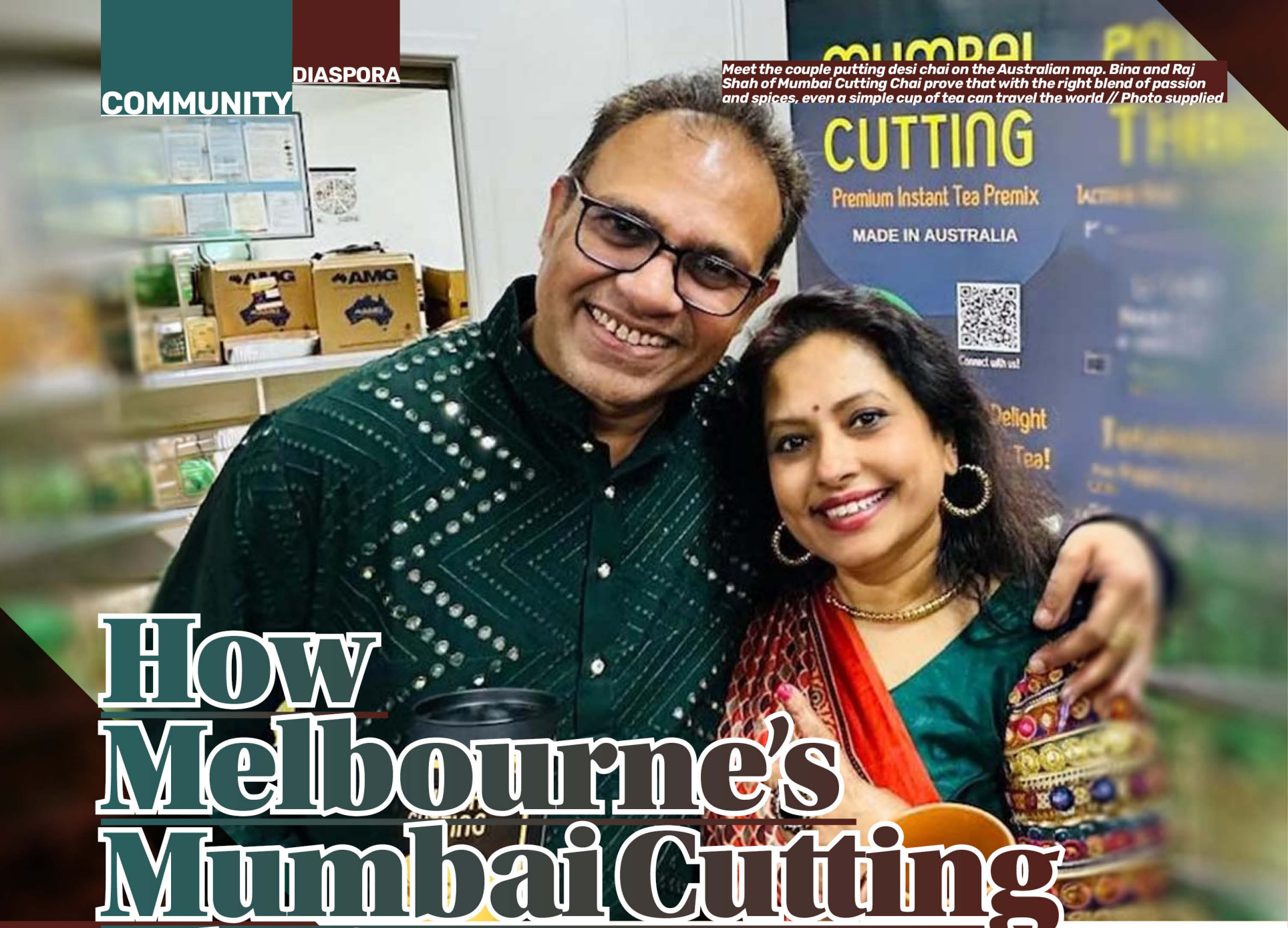
Despite the darkness of the narrative, she said the work also attempts to preserve ideas of courage and moral confrontation.

"Both narratives contain tragedy, sacrifice, resilience and moral confrontation," she said.

The creators describe *Kashmir* as a political and psychological drama shaped through Shakespearean structure but grounded in South Asian realities. Ganguly believes the icy mountains and emotional bleakness of Kargil naturally lent themselves to the atmosphere of Shakespearean tragedy.

"The icy mountains of Kargil could even symbolically resemble the bleak atmosphere of Shakespearean tragedy," she said.





Meet the couple putting desi chai on the Australian map. Bina and Raj Shah of Mumbai Cutting Chai prove that with the right blend of passion and spices, even a simple cup of tea can travel the world // Photo supplied

How Melbourne's Mumbai Cutting Chai is brewing a taste of home

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

Ahead of **International Chai Day** on 21 May, we meet the Melbourne entrepreneurs Bina and Raj Shah turning a migrant's craving into a booming business.

For Bina and Raj Shah, the day doesn't really start until they have had their tea or chai. It's not just about the caffeine. It's the warmth, the spices, and the quiet moment of comfort before the chaos of the day begins.

"If you're tired, happy, or sad, chai is the go-to thing," Bina says.

But when Bina first arrived in Australia from India back in 1993, that simple comfort was nowhere to be found. What passed for tea here was a disappointment.

"We always got dip-dip tea bags with cold milk," she laughs, still sounding a little offended after all these years.

Coming from Mumbai and Gujarat, where chai is a ritual made with ginger, cardamom, mint, and sometimes tulsi (holy basil), the Australian version just didn't cut it. For years, she and her husband Raj missed that authentic taste. Making the perfect masala chai at home every day was a luxury they couldn't afford. Still, the craving never went away.

For a long time, the Shahs did what most migrants do. They suffered through bad coffee or brought back premixes from India in their suitcases. They shared these packets with friends, and soon, everyone was asking the same question: Where did you get this? Can you get me some?

That's when the penny dropped. Bina and Raj realised that the market in Australia had finally matured. It wasn't just Indians missing home anymore. Non-Indians were starting to discover and love the complex flavours of real chai.

"There was growing demand and growing awareness," Bina explains. "We thought, this is the right time."

But they didn't want to just import the same old stuff. When they looked at the ingredients on the back of the packets from India, they saw a lot of unnecessary additives. Plus, you can't import natural dairy products from India anyway. So, they decided to do it themselves.

In 2023, after a full year of research and **<TURN TO #39>**

> Bina and Raj realised that...It wasn't just Indians...Non-Indians were starting to discover and love the complex flavours of real chai



Just good chai and good company at Mumbai Cutting Chai, Clayton // Photo supplied

<CONTINUED FROM #38> testing with thousands of friends and family, Mumbai Cutting Chai was born. They set up a manufacturing unit in Dandenong South, where they blend everything locally. About 80 percent of the ingredients such as the milk powder, sugar, and creamer are Australian. But the heart of the tea, the extract, still comes from where it belongs: Assam and Darjeeling.

"You can't have chai without Assamese tea," Bina says.

The name itself comes from a nostalgic Mumbai memory. In the busy business districts of the city, people used to have so many visitors that they couldn't drink full cups of tea all day. So they started pouring "cutting chai"—half a glass, just enough to share and be polite.

Today, Mumbai Cutting Chai is a full-blown success story. They produce about 3,000 kilos of chai powder every month. One kilo makes about 50 cups. And the chai has travelled.

"Our chai has reached Japan, Malaysia, America, and Canada," Bina says.

One of her favourite stories is about a Malaysian restaurant owner who was visiting his daughter in Melbourne. He tasted their chai, fell in love with it, and literally left his clothes behind. He used his entire baggage allowance to carry packets of Mumbai Cutting Chai back to Malaysia. Now, they export to him commercially. They have even received FDA approval to start sending chai to the United States.

But for Bina, the numbers are not the whole story.

"Tea is culture in India. It's a religion," she says. "If you say you don't drink tea, it's almost offensive."

She sees people switching back to chai after years of drinking coffee, simply because they could never find the real thing. Even international artists and cricketers demand their chai when they tour Melbourne.

As World Tea Day approaches on 21 May, Bina's message is simple: Drink more tea. Go back to the basics.

She wants chai to become as common here as a flat white. Not as a fancy, overpriced drink, but as an everyday comfort. Whether you are an Indian expat missing the buzz of a Mumbai tapri, or an Aussie looking for something warmer and spicier than a latte.

"Great chai isn't just brewed," Bina says. "It's shared."





Representatives from community groups, local organisations and businesses gathered in Cairns for the Community Leaders Dinner and Meet & Greet, co-hosted by GOPIO Cairns Inc. and Centacare FNQ, focusing on inclusion, collaboration and multicultural engagement across Far North Queensland. Photo supplied

Cairns Indian Festival 2026 announced at multicultural leaders dinner

OUR REPORTER *CAIRNS*
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Community leaders, business representatives and multicultural organisations gathered in Cairns this week for a networking dinner that also featured major announcements tied to Far North Queensland's growing multicultural sector.

The Community Leaders Dinner and Meet & Greet was co-hosted by GOPIO Cairns Inc. and Centacare FNQ, bringing together representatives from community groups, local organisations and businesses for discussions around inclusion, economic participation and future collaboration in the region.

A presentation by Hari Hara Priya Kannan from The Demographics Group focused on changing population patterns, diversity and demographic trends shaping Far North Queensland. The session prompted discussion around how businesses, service providers and community organisations could respond to the needs of a growing multicultural population.

> Another announcement during the dinner involved plans for a new Multicultural Business Forum, which will be supported by the Cairns Chamber of Commerce

During the evening, GOPIO Cairns Inc. officially unveiled the poster for the Cairns Indian Festival 2026, confirming the event will be held on Saturday, 12 September 2026 at Fogarty Park.

The festival is expected to feature Indian food, music, dance and cultural performances while attracting visitors from across Far North Queensland and interstate. Organisers said the annual event would continue to promote Indian culture while encouraging wider community participation.

Another announcement during the dinner involved plans for a new Multicultural Business Forum, which will be supported by the Cairns Chamber of Commerce. The forum is expected to strengthen links between multicultural communities, local businesses and industry groups, with a focus on networking, collaboration and economic opportunities.

Organisers acknowledged the contribution of community groups and attendees who participated in the event and thanked Spicy Bite Smithfield for hosting the gathering and providing catering.

The event reflected continuing efforts by multicultural organisations in Far North Queensland to build stronger partnerships between community groups, businesses and civic organisations as the region's population continues to diversify.

13-year-old turns Great Barrier Reef fears into climate book

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A 13-year-old student from the Gold Coast is set to release his first book, combining fantasy storytelling with climate awareness and marine conservation themes aimed at young readers across Australia and beyond.

Arshaan Ameer, a student at The Southport School, will launch The Guardians of the Shift: The Coral Quest, a middle-grade eco-adventure designed for readers aged 8 to 14. The book follows the journey of Leon Ascanius through an ocean-based fantasy world connected to the Great Barrier Reef, with a focus on environmental awareness and climate change.

Arshaan said the project is intended to present climate issues in a constructive way. "I want to spread hope, not fear, about climate change," he said. "My book is designed to inspire young readers to take action and understand the importance of marine conservation and environmental awareness."



Gold Coast student author Arshaan Ameer

> Arshaan has also received a personal letter from Sir David Attenborough, acknowledging his work and the broader importance of raising awareness on climate issues

The release adds to a growing profile for the young author, who has previously worked as a filmmaker and environmental advocate. His documentary Generation Green has drawn attention for its focus on climate change and earned him a certificate from the Australian Book of Records, recognising him among the youngest documentary writers and directors in the country.

Arshaan has also received a personal letter from Sir David Attenborough, acknowledging his work and the broader importance of raising awareness on climate issues among younger audiences.

The book is positioned to engage families, educators and schools, with the author expressing a longer-term goal for its reach. "I dream of a day when this book finds its place in every library and becomes a part of the Australian school curriculum," he said. "I believe that through storytelling, we can ignite a passion for environmental stewardship in young minds, empowering them to become the guardians of our planet's future."

The book will be available globally through major retailers including Amazon, with early interest building around its combination of fantasy narrative and environmental themes linked to the Great Barrier Reef and climate education.

Arshaan continues to share his work through digital platforms, where he focuses on storytelling, filmmaking and environmental advocacy. His latest project places him among a small group of young Australian voices using creative media to address climate change and sustainability.



From church pews to temple stages: Christina Prakanthan's unlikely journey

INDIRA LAISRAM
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Christina Prakanthan grew up Christian in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Her family went to church. They celebrated Christian holidays. But somehow, without any friction or contradiction, Bharatanatyam became as natural to her as breathing.

"The sounds we heard, the language we spoke, the music around us, the temple festivals, the food we ate, and the stories we listened to all naturally shaped our understanding of culture and aesthetics," reflects Christina. While she had a strong Christian upbringing—convent school and all—she today embraces both traditions in a balanced way. Married to a Hindu, she and her family celebrate festivals and observe values from both faiths with mutual respect and harmony.

Her journey into Bharatanatyam began almost accidentally. Accompanying her elder sister Daveena to classes, young Christina, barely three, would stand outside imitating the movements. Her first teacher, the late Smt. Husseini Hariram, noticed and told her mother, "Why don't you enrol this child as well?"

Christina remembers standing near the stage wings, crying before her first performance. "My mother was consoling me and encouraging me to go forward. I still have a photograph from that moment, holding flowers with tears in my eyes."

That frightened little girl would go on to build one of Melbourne's most respected Bharatanatyam schools—Natyatharu School of Dance—now marking 14 years in Australia.

Christina and her sister trained together for nearly 15 years under Dr Suryakala Jeevanandhan, performing across Sri Lanka and completing their arangetram together in 2002. Her mother, who never had the chance to learn dance as a young girl, poured everything into her daughters through sacrifice and love. Her father stood by them with quiet strength.

"I cannot imagine a life where dance is not part of me," she says.

Daveena moved to America. Christina moved to Melbourne after marriage. But dance travelled with both. "The idea of Natyatharu TURN TO #45





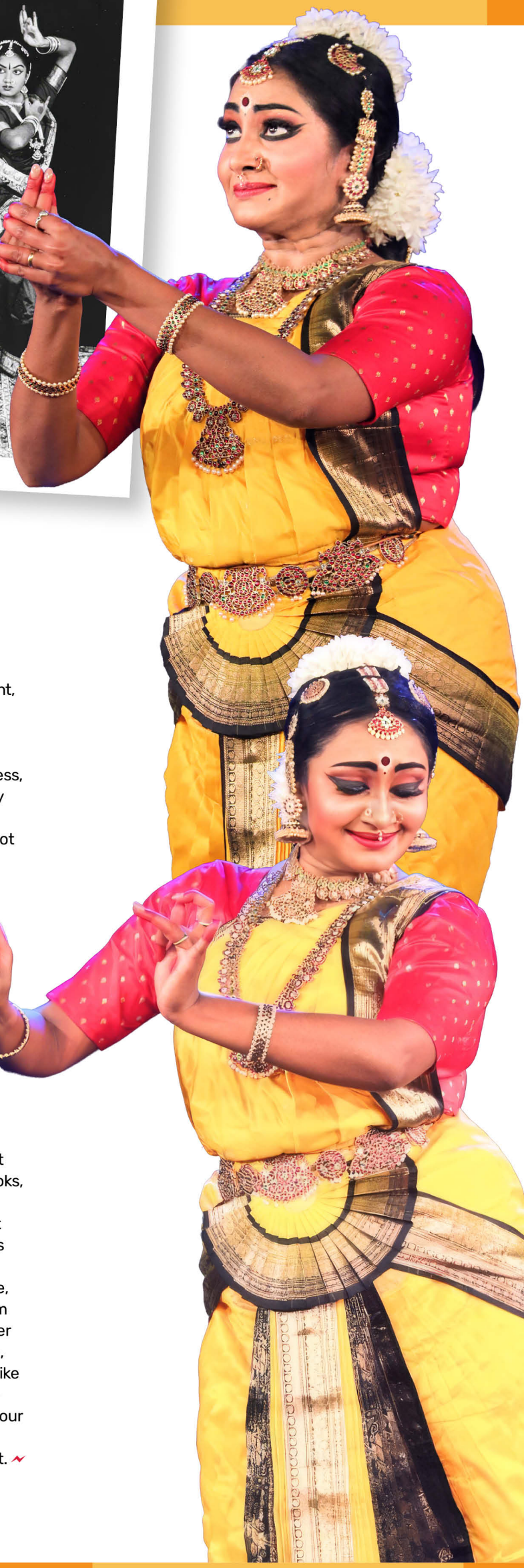
> The idea of Natyatharu was born during a conversation between my sister and me before I moved to Australia. We wanted to remain connected through the art form even while living in different parts of the world
>
> **CHRISTINA PRAKANTHAN**











CONTINUED FROM #43 was born during a conversation between my sister and me before I moved to Australia. We wanted to remain connected through the art form."

When she arrived in Melbourne in 2012, she printed flyers from Officeworks, visited temples and Indian grocery stores, and personally distributed advertisements. "I hired a proper studio space even with very few students because I wanted to build the school professionally from the very beginning."

Fourteen years later, Natyatharu is a living community. What makes Christina different from many dance teachers is her annual concert, titled Ādal, featuring her students—women balancing careers, children, homes, and everyday life.

"Children bring innocence and vibrant energy. Teenagers bring intensity. The mothers' group brings maturity and emotional depth. Dance, to me, is like water. You can pour it into any vessel and it naturally takes that shape."

The word Ādal comes from ancient Tamil references to dance and storytelling. "Twenty-five years ago, many of these things would have been dreams. Today, to see migrant women driving to class independently, balancing careers, raising children, and still pursuing art—that is very powerful."

This year, Christina has arranged something ambitious. Her concert on 20 June will feature live musicians (nattuvanar, vocalist, percussionist, violinist), all Melbourne-based except a couple travelling from Sydney.

Most overseas dance schools use recorded music, but Christina says live music creates "an emotional dialogue that happens in real time. When musicians are physically present, breathing and responding alongside the dancer, that energy cannot be manufactured. Dancing with live musicians teaches listening, awareness, sensitivity, and timing in a completely different way."

For Christina, Bharatanatyam is not simply performance. "Art teaches patience, humility, observation, discipline, and empathy."

Living and teaching in multicultural Australia has also changed her approach. Children growing up here do not automatically inherit the cultural environment she experienced in Colombo. Teachers must help create those connections gently. "If I am teaching a piece about Lord Rama, I show them pictures, books, temple sculptures, and stories. Once children emotionally connect to what they are learning, the dance becomes meaningful."

Christina runs her school full-time, yet every week still takes lessons from her guru, Dr Lakshmi Ramaswamy. Her grand guru, Smt. Chitra Visweswaran, once remarked: "A dancer should be like pickle. You must soak and soak in the art form for years before the true flavour emerges."

Christina has never forgotten that.

ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਖਾਰਦਾ ਹੈ

ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਦੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਨਾਲ ਹਰ ਸਾਲ $2,700 ਤੱਕ ਦੀ ਬੱਚਤ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ

OUR REPORTER
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ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਦੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਦੋ ਸਾਲਾਂ ਲਈ ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਵਰਤ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਹਰ ਬੱਚੇ ਲਈ ਹਰ ਸਾਲ $2,700 ਤੱਕ ਦੀ ਬੱਚਤ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਹੁਣ ਕੁੱਝ ਬੱਚੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਾਲ ਵਿੱਚ (ਹਰ ਹਫ਼ਤੇ) ਕਿੰਡਰ ਦੇ ਵਧੀਕ ਘੰਟਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਯੋਗ ਹੋਣਗੇ।

ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਲਈ, ਕਿੰਡਰ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤੀ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ; ਇਹ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਕੱਠੇ ਵੱਧਣ-ਫੁੱਲਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨ ਬਾਰੇ ਵੀ ਹੈ।

ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਦੀ ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਪਹਿਲ ਰਾਹੀਂ, ਹੁਣ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਗੁਣਵੱਤਾ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤੀ ਬਚਪਨ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਤੱਕ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਹਾਸਲ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਭਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਾਪੇ ਅਤੇ ਦੇਖਭਾਲ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੇਖ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਦੇ ਵਧੇ ਹੋਏ ਘੰਟੇ ਨਾ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਲਈ, ਸਗੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਪੂਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਲਈ ਕਿੰਨਾ ਵੱਡਾ ਫ਼ਰਕ ਪਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਦੇ ਵਾਧੂ ਘੰਟੇ ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਦੇਖਭਾਲ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕੰਮ 'ਤੇ ਵਾਪਸ ਜਾਣ, ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਕਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਰੋਜ਼ਮਰ੍ਹਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀਆਂ ਸੰਭਾਲਣ ਲਈ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਸਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਰਹਿਣ-ਸਹਿਣ ਦੇ ਖ਼ਰਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਬਾਅ ਨੂੰ ਘਟਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ, ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਇਹ ਜਾਣ ਕੇ ਸੰਤੁਸ਼ਟੀ ਮਿਲਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਬੱਚਾ ਇੱਕ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਅਤ ਅਤੇ ਸਹਾਇਕ ਮਾਹੌਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਕਸਤ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਦੇ ਇੱਕ ਮਾਪੇ ਨੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਦੇ ਵਾਧੂ ਘੰਟੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੋਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ, ਇਹ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਖੇਡ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਜਦੋਂ ਕਿ ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਰੋਜ਼ਮਰ੍ਹਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਲਚਕਤਾ ਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ:

"ਮੈਨੂੰ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਬਹੁਤ ਵਧੀਆ ਪਹਿਲ ਹੈ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਸਦਾ ਲਾਭ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਉਹ ਵੱਧ ਘੰਟੇ ਹਨ, ਜਦੋਂ ਉਹ ਹੋਰ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਬੱਚੇ ਵੱਧ ਸਿੱਖਣਗੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਵੱਧ ਮਿਲਣ-ਜੁਲਣ ਦਾ ਮੌਕਾ ਵੀ ਮਿਲੇਗਾ।" ਭਾਰਤੀ ਮਾਪਾ, ਮਈ 2026।

ਕਿੰਡਰ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਖੇਡਣ, ਸਿੱਖਣ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਕਸਤ ਹੋਣ ਦੇ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਖਾਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਭੂਮਿਕਾ ਨਿਭਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਹਿਲੀਆਂ ਦੋਸਤੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਰੀ ਉਮਰ ਕੰਮ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਹੁਨਰਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਉਤਸੁਕਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਆਤਮ-ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਤੱਕ, ਇਹ ਉਹ ਥਾਂ ਹੈ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਸਾਂਝੀਆਂ ਕਰਨਾ, ਦੂਜੇ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਸੁਣਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਇਕੱਠੇ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨਾ ਸਿੱਖਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਹ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤੀ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਕੂਲ ਅਤੇ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਲਈ ਤਿਆਰੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਆਤਮ-ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸੀ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਦੇ ਇੱਕ ਹੋਰ ਮਾਪੇ ਨੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਕਿੰਡਰਗਾਰਟਨ ਨੇ ਖੇਡ-ਆਧਾਰਿਤ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਅਹਿਮ ਹੁਨਰ ਵਿਕਸਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ:

"ਮੈਨੂੰ ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਦੀ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤੀ ਬਚਪਨ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਬਹੁਤ ਪਸੰਦ ਹੈ। ਮੈਂ ਖੇਡ-ਆਧਾਰਿਤ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਲੀ ਨਾਲ ਸਹਿਮਤ ਹਾਂ। "ਬੱਚੇ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖਦੇ, ਸਗੋਂ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਹੁਨਰ, ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਅਤੇ ਦੋਸਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਮਿਲ ਕੇ ਸਮੱਸਿਆਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖਦੇ ਹਨ।" ਵੀਅਤਨਾਮੀ ਮਾਪਾ, ਮਈ 2026।

ਹਰ ਬੱਚਾ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵਧੀਆ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤ ਦਾ ਮੌਕਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਹੱਕਦਾਰ ਹੈ। ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਦੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਧੀਆ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤੀ ਬਚਪਨ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਤੱਕ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਸੂਬੇ ਭਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

ਫ੍ਰੀ ਕਿੰਡਰ ਬਾਰੇ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਨ ਲਈ, vic.gov.au/kinder/punjabi 'ਤੇ ਜਾਓ।

ਵਿਕਟੋਰੀਆ ਸਰਕਾਰ, 1 ਟ੍ਰੇਜ਼ਰੀ ਪਲੇਸ, ਮੈਲਬੌਰਨ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਜਾਰੀ।



A day at Parliament House with Werribee MP John Lister

NIKHIL SURESH
@the_indian_sun



Werribee MP John Lister takes a selfie with Williamstown High School students Nikhil and a fellow student during a work experience visit with The Indian Sun

As part of my school's Year 10 curriculum, students are given the opportunity to spend a week experiencing what it is like to be part of the workforce. I chose to complete my placement with The Indian Sun, a multicultural media organisation serving the Indian community in Australia. One of my assignments during the week was to meet with the Member of Parliament for Werribee, John Lister.

Lister is a public servant focused on improving the community in which he grew up. Before entering politics, he worked as a secondary school teacher in the Wyndham area, an experience that continues to shape his approach to leadership.

A strong advocate for accessible education, Lister believes every child should have access to a quality state school close to home.

"I'm a proud state school educator, and believe that every kid should be able to access the best education close to home," Lister said. "I am working closely with school communities to upgrade their facilities and support programs in disability inclusion and academic enrichment."

> Lister believes every child should have access to a quality state school close to home

Lister's background in education gives him an informed perspective on the needs of young people and schools across the electorate.

"I have been pushing for more spaces for young people to connect and feel supported. The Labor Government has funded an expanded youth centre in Manor Lakes, along with additional services in schools," he said. "I'm also passionate about creating further opportunities for young people, which is why I'm proud to be part of a government that has protected the right to Free TAFE courses."

Through his engagement with the community, Lister said public transport remains a major issue in the electorate. Residents have raised concerns about limited and unreliable train services, along with gaps in bus networks across Wyndham.

"I want public transport to be the first choice for people getting around Wyndham," Lister said. "I have also championed increased capacity on the Wyndham Vale line, more services on the Werribee line, and a significant uplift in bus services across the electorate."

Visiting Parliament House and interviewing an MP gave me a better understanding of how local issues are discussed in politics. The experience also showed me how journalism can help connect communities with decision-makers.



Hanson renews ABC threat, vows to cut funding and push subscription model

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

One Nation leader **Pauline Hanson** has renewed calls to strip most public funding from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, saying the national broadcaster has "failed its bias test yet again" and should move towards a subscription-based model.

In a post on X that has reignited debate around the future of public broadcasting in Australia, Hanson criticised ABC chair Kim Williams and outlined a proposal that would preserve some regional services while placing greater pressure on metropolitan news operations.

"The ABC has failed its bias test yet again, as chair Kim Williams is caught taking another swipe at One Nation," Hanson said.

"I would pull the $1.3 billion in ABC funding, and turn them into a subscription. **<TURN TO #49>**

> I would pull the $1.3 billion in ABC funding, and turn them into a subscription. The regional places like radio that do a good job can stay
>
> **PAULINE HANSON, LEADER — ONE NATION**



The ABC Ultimo Centre, the headquarters of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Credit: lleerogers / iStock

Sydney and Melbourne remain the centre of many national news and production teams. Hanson's proposal would therefore place the sharpest focus on metropolitan editorial operations if pursued politically

❮CONTINUED FROM #48❯

"The regional places like radio that do a good job can stay but all the ABC "journalists" in the capital city will have to prove the Australian people want them."

The comments come as questions continue around the role of taxpayer-funded media, editorial independence and audience trust in Australia's changing media environment.

Federal budget papers show the ABC is expected to receive about $1.229 billion in government funding for 2025–26, with total expenses forecast at more than $1.3 billion. Employee costs account for a large portion of the broadcaster's spending, while staffing remains heavily concentrated in New South Wales and Victoria, where many of the ABC's major television, radio and digital operations are based.

ABC workforce figures published last year recorded more than 4,600 non-casual employees nationally. Nearly half were located in New South Wales, with Victoria accounting for a further 17.5 per cent.

Sydney and Melbourne remain the centre of many national news and production teams. Hanson's proposal would therefore place the sharpest focus on metropolitan editorial operations if pursued politically.

One Nation has criticised the ABC for years over what it describes as political bias within publicly funded media. Hanson's latest comments suggest the party is continuing to push for structural reform in the media space.



Pauline Hanson. Photo/X

Supporters of the approach argue taxpayers should not be required to fund media organisations they believe lack neutrality. Critics argue reducing ABC funding could weaken public interest journalism, emergency broadcasting capacity and national coverage outside commercial priorities.

The ABC continues to play a major role across television, radio, online reporting and regional broadcasting. Its charter requires it to provide services that contribute to a sense of national identity while reflecting the diversity of the Australian community.

Any shift towards a subscription-based structure would likely require legislative changes, operational restructuring and decisions about which services remain publicly funded. Regional radio, which Hanson singled out for protection, has long been viewed as one of the broadcaster's strongest public service functions, particularly during bushfires, floods and other emergencies.

The debate also arrives as Australian media companies continue adapting to falling traditional advertising revenue, audience fragmentation and growing competition from international digital platforms, podcasts, streaming services and subscription news outlets.



Photos supplied

Trust, Certainty and Building the Dream

Why More Families Are Choosing Simonds Homes

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

For many families, buying or building a home is not simply a financial decision. It is a defining life milestone shaped by migration journeys and the desire to create long-term stability with a home that will grow with your family.

In today's property market, one factor consistently determines whether families move forward or delay: trust and certainty.

Across Victoria, Southeast Queensland and South Australia, families are increasingly turning to established builders who can simplify the process and provide clarity from the very beginning.

For over 76 years, Simonds Homes has built its reputation on exactly that, delivering confidence through experience, structure, and transparent guidance at every stage of the journey.

With a 76-year legacy in Australian home building and dedicated New Home Specialists guiding every step, Simonds has become a trusted name for families seeking not just a home, but peace of mind.

Backed by a Lifetime Structural Guarantee^, Simonds places long-term confidence at the centre of every home it builds. For families making one of the biggest financial and emotional commitments of their lives, this level of assurance provides something essential: the certainty that their home is designed not just for today, but for decades to come.

But while guarantees and processes provide reassurance, it is the lived experiences of customers that truly show what that confidence looks like in practice.

From knockdown rebuilds to first homes, these stories highlight how that promise of long-term security translates into real homes, real families, and real milestones.

TURNING UNCERTAINTY INTO CONFIDENCE: NAVEEN AND MOUNIKA'S KNOCKDOWN REBUILD JOURNEY

For Naveen and Mounika, the decision to rebuild was driven by





> Knocking down a house and rebuilding is a big task, but it feels easy through Simonds. It's an absolute dream for me to live in our new house and Simonds gave us a lot of confidence and made the journey very easy

NAVEEN & MOUNIKA

something deeply personal: creating a stronger future for their children after migrating to Australia eight years ago.

Like many families, they were initially hesitant. A knockdown rebuild can feel complex… Demolition, approvals, budgeting, construction timelines, and endless decisions.

But what changed everything was clarity early in the process.

At the Simonds Riverlea Display Centre, they met New Home Specialist Sid Lakhina. That first conversation became a turning point.

"The way he spoke to us and explained in detail the knockdown rebuild process made us realise we could achieve our dream of a beautiful home on our land," Naveen says.

Soon after visiting the Highett 29 display home with the Newland façade, the decision became clearer. The design from the Elevate range aligned perfectly with their vision of modern family living, practical, spacious, and future-focused.

Importantly, what gave them confidence wasn't just the design, but the certainty around the journey itself.

In a market where many families worry about unexpected costs or delays, that reassurance matters. Knowing the process is structured, supported, and clearly communicated allows decisions to move forward with confidence rather than hesitation.

Construction began in September. By March, they were already approaching practical completion.

But for Naveen and Mounika, the biggest transformation wasn't just their home, it was the experience.

"Knocking down a house and rebuilding is a big task, but it feels easy through Simonds," they shared.

"It's an absolute dream for me to live in our new house and Simonds gave us a lot of confidence and made the journey very easy," Mounika says.

As they now prepare for handover, their home represents more than construction. It represents certainty, stability, and a new beginning.

FIRST HOME CONFIDENCE IN A NEW COUNTRY: VIVEK AND LAKSHMI'S JOURNEY IN GAWLER

For Vivek and Lakshmi, building their first home in Australia was both exciting and deeply significant. Like many first home buyers, their biggest concern wasn't design, it was trust, transparency, and financial certainty.

Before choosing a builder, they explored multiple options. But what stood out most was the clarity of communication and flexibility offered through their New Home Specialist, Shiv Arora.

"We liked Simonds' transparency, communication and flexibility. We found the inclusions to be really good value too," Lakshmi says.

From the earliest drafting stages through to construction, the couple felt informed and supported. Weekly updates helped transform what is often an overwhelming experience into something structured and predictable.

That consistency played a crucial role in their decision-making. In today's environment, where rising property prices are a real concern, having certainty around cost matters more than ever. The Simonds Fixed Price Guarantee provided exactly that—removing the risk of unexpected financial changes during the build journey.

Guided by Shiv, they selected the Mayne 30, a thoughtfully designed single-storey home in the growing Gawler region near Adelaide's Barossa Valley. The home offered space, flow, and functionality—perfect for their future family life.

Construction progressed smoothly, and within months, they were moving in.

Originally from Gujarat in India, Vivek and Lakshmi moved to Australia in 2015 in search of opportunity and a better future. Their home now reflects that journey.

"When we called our parents and showed them the home on video call, it was a very proud moment for them. We also feel proud because we made our parents' dream come true," Lakshmi says.

For them, the home is more than a milestone, it is a symbol of progress, sacrifice, and achievement shared across generations.

BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY AT A SIMONDS DISPLAY HOME

With display homes across Victoria, South East Queensland and South Australia, Simonds offers families the opportunity to experience designs first-hand and take the next step with confidence.

*To explore home designs or speak with a New Home Specialist, visit your nearest display centre at **simonds.com.au**.*

*^T&C's apply, go to **simonds.com.au** for more information.*

ABSC Inc hosts Annual Gala Dinner & launches EKONOMOS, Issue 7, 2026

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The **Australian Business Summit Council Inc. (ABSC Inc.)** hosted its **Annual Gala Dinner** and **launch of EKONOMOS Issue 7** at Aqua Luna Waterfront Dining, Drummoyne, on 29 May 2026, gathering nearly 300 diplomatic representatives, business leaders, and community stakeholders from Australia and worldwide.

The event drew ambassadors, high commissioners, diplomats, business leaders, academics, bankers, lawyers, government and media representatives, underscoring ABSC Inc.'s growing role in international engagement, economic cooperation, and cross-cultural collaboration.

MC Mr John Gatfield OAM opened the evening warmly. Ambassadors from Indonesia, Egypt, Türkiye, Colombia, Romania, Angola, Mongolia, Zimbabwe, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Kosovo attended, along with High Commissioners from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Botswana and Mauritius. Deputy High Commissioners from Kenya and Uganda, Chargés d'Affaires from Ethiopia and Sudan, and Consuls-General from China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Poland, the Netherlands, Uruguay and Vanuatu also attended, plus representatives from the US, France, Greece, Iraq, Malaysia, Thailand, Hungary, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

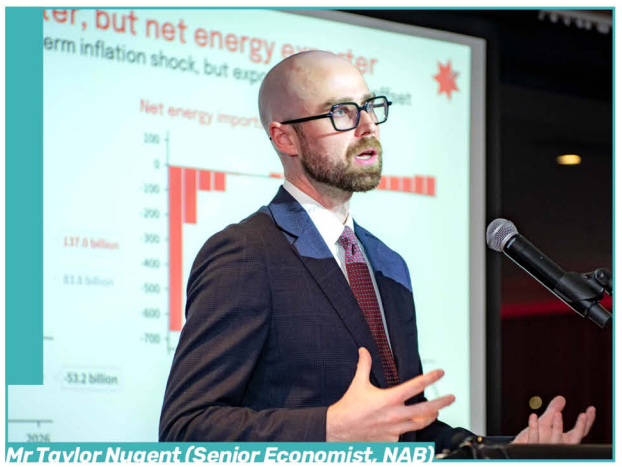
ABSC Inc. President Dr Frank Alafaci PhD described EKONOMOS as more than a business magazine—an intellectual platform for ambassadors, diplomats, business leaders, academics, and policymakers to share insights on trade, investment, innovation, leadership, and cooperation. He noted economic diplomacy now shapes international relations, with trade and investment building partnerships, stability, and long-term cooperation. Issue 7 features 27 distinguished authors plus his own contribution, covering global trade, economic diplomacy, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, sustainability, leadership, governance, education, and international engagement.

Keynote speaker Mr Taylor Nugent, Senior Economist at National Australia Bank, analysed inflationary pressures, business confidence, labour markets, consumer activity, trade dynamics, and broader macroeconomic trends, offering valuable perspectives on today's complex global environment.

Internationally acclaimed tenor Mr Simon Kim (South Korean-born, European-trained) performed Italian operatic works and 〈TURN TO #53〉


Dr. Frank Alafaci PhD (ABSC Inc. President)


Mr John Gatfield OAM


Mr Taylor Nugent (Senior Economist, NAB)



Mr Simon Kim (Tenor, Opera Australia)

ABSC Inc. President Dr Frank Alafaci PhD described EKONOMOS as more than a business magazine—an intellectual platform for ambassadors, diplomats, business



CONTINUED FROM #52 traditional repertoire, highlighting culture's role in fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Dr Alafaci formally launched Issue 7—the most internationally diverse edition to date—featuring ambassadors, high commissioners, business executives, academics, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders from around the globe.

The EKONOMOS Contributors Recognition Ceremony presented hard copies and crystal plaques to contributors from Angola, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Thailand, Uganda, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Botswana, the Netherlands, and an outstanding group of business leaders, academics, and professionals.

The Sponsors Recognition Ceremony thanked Alliance Project Group, Arab Bank Australia Limited, EZGrants, Symphonic Management Consulting, Serenade Leather, Blue River Wines, DRS ABCD First Aid Training, and TradeWindow. Dr Alafaci noted sponsorship reflects confidence in ABSC Inc.'s mission and commitment to international dialogue and partnership.

Contributors, sponsors, diplomats, and dignitaries then gathered for the official commemorative photograph.

Mr John Gatfield OAM closed, calling the evening a celebration of international friendship, multiculturalism, diplomacy, and business collaboration. He thanked Dr Frank Alafaci, Councillor Sylvia Alafaci, the Board, committee members, volunteers, sponsors, and diplomatic representatives.

As guests departed, the consensus held that the 2026 Annual Gala Dinner and EKONOMOS Issue 7 launch was one of ABSC Inc.'s most successful events—reinforcing that meaningful relationships, constructive dialogue, and international cooperation remain essential for prosperity, peace, and mutual understanding.









AI can't replace a writer's voice



Alice Reid. Photo supplied

 # EULOGY TO THE INTERNET

Generative AI is changing the way we think about storytelling, but it can't replace the human love for creation. If we all produced AI-generated books, we'd just be regurgitating the same stories over and over again



Children's author Andy Griffiths speaks to young readers during a previous appearance at the Williamstown Literary Festival, which has featured leading Australian writers and community events since 2003.



A giant whale puppet moves along Williamstown beach during a previous Williamstown Literary Festival event, reflecting the festival's mix of literature, performance and community engagement. Photo supplied

> *"It's vital during those years to keep books and reading visible, and to frame it as a good and enjoyable thing" — Alice Reid*

NIKHIL SURESH
@the_indian_sun

The **Williamstown Literary Festival** returns from 12 to 14 June with a new programming team, a broad theme centred around "Reflections", and conversations expected around censorship, reading habits and creativity in the digital age.

This year's festival is being led by **Alice Reid** and Rita Horanyi, both working on Willy Lit Fest for the first time. Reid is a librarian at Williamstown High School's Bayview Campus, as well as a writer and founder of the online literary magazine Two Wolves Digest.

Speaking with **Nikhil Suresh**, Reid discussed this year's programme, younger readers, AI and why literary festivals still matter in local communities.

Below are edited excerpts from the interview.

What's the vision behind this year's Williamstown Literary Festival, and how does it differ from previous years?

The theme for Willy Lit Fest in 2026 is Reflections, which we interpreted quite broadly whilst programming the festival. Reflections was a good fit because of Williamstown's seaside aspect (ie, reflections on water). It also provides space for discussions about the state of the world, and how art and literature acts as a mirror.

This is the first year Rita Horanyi (program co-director) and I have worked for Willy Lit Fest, so I can't say for certain how it will differ from previous years. But we were keen to program with a theme in mind, which the festival didn't have last year.

We also wanted to bring our own individual skills and experience to the line-up. For Rita, that included current issues and programming specifically to a place/location. For me, it was programming for younger people (kids, teens and adults in the 18-35 bracket).

What kinds of conversations or themes do you think audiences are most interested in this year?

I think freedom of speech and censorship in the arts will be a big one. Especially considering what has happened at other writers' festivals in the past year—particularly the boycotts at Bendigo Writers Festival and Adelaide Writers Week.

How important is the festival to the local Williamstown and Melbourne west community?

It's important. Festivals like Willy Lit Fest draw in people from all over the city, so it's a great opportunity to showcase Williamstown. The festival also gives local writers a platform alongside nationally-recognised names.

Writers' festivals in general are important because reading and writing are often solitary pursuits. When we hold festivals celebrating literature, it's suddenly a lively, social thing.

Have you noticed changes in reading habits or audience demographics over recent years, especially among younger people?

Yes and no (sorry this answer is going to be long because I have lots of thoughts about it!).

I think people get very alarmist about the "kids not reading", and it's true that there are more (digital) distractions in 2026… but people have been saying "kids don't read anymore" since I was a kid in the mid-90s. There's always something that pulls people away from sitting with a book.

In my experience as a school librarian, I see so many Year 7s who emerge from primary school as enthusiastic readers, only to abandon reading completely by Year 9. I'm not too worried about it—a lot of them will return to reading when they're adults and they have the headspace for it.

Having said that, it's vital during those years to keep books and reading visible, and to frame it as a good and enjoyable thing. And digital distractions and dwindling attention spans are something we're all battling right now, not just young people.

There are also many, many older teens and people in their twenties who can now discover books via online avenues (e.g BookTok), which is great, but this isn't quite reflected in the demographic attending writers' festivals—it's usually an older crowd. I imagine this is because older people have the money to spend at a writers' festival, and also because writers' festivals are often programmed with an older crowd in mind. It will be interesting to see if this changes over the next decade or so.

What do you hope people take away from the festival after attending the sessions and events?

I hope they are entertained and learn something new about their community, both local and global. I also hope they are inspired to read/buy/support the work of writers on the line-up.

Do you think advancing technologies like AI is changing the way people think about writing, storytelling and creativity? Has that come up in this year's festival discussions at all?

Yes, generative AI is changing the way people think about writing, creativity and storytelling. It raises an interesting question for the writer/artist about what's important here—the creative process or the end result? If you're someone who loves the process of writing and creating, there's no joy in producing an AI-written book. Why would you do it? There are smarter ways to make money. And as for the end result, AI can only take it so far. If we all produced AI-generated books, we'd just be regurgitating the same stories over and over again.

AI might be disrupting creative industries right now, but people will always write/create for the love of it, and to have their own voice/story be heard. AI can't replace either of those things.

We don't have any events at this year's festival that are specifically about AI, but we do have an event called Eulogy to the Internet. This will be a reading performance from four writers on the state of the internet… what it used to be, what it has become, and whether we can fix it. There will likely be mentions of AI slop.

Where smoke meets discipline: Tandoori Joint

Between a train station trailer and a shopping centre fit-out, ***Tandoori Joint*** *found its clarity — and serves it, plate by plate*





NAV GANESH
@the_indian_sun

You don't always notice the moment something lands. It's subtle.

Somewhere between the first bite and the second, you slow down, not because you're full, but because your brain is catching up to what just happened.

Smoke. Heat. Texture. Restraint.

It registers in layers.

That's how **Tandoori Joint** in Mickleham introduces itself.

Not loudly. Not theatrically.

Just correctly.

But this story doesn't start here.

Before the polished fit-out at Merrifield City Shopping Centre, before the expanded menu, there was a food trailer stationed near Craigieburn Station.

That's where I first met Amrinder, known as Sanket to those around him, about a year ago.

Even then, there was something different about him. Not just passion, but clarity. You could see he understood what he was building and, more importantly, how to build it.

In that trailer **<TURN TO #58>**



> We didn't move to change anything. Just to do it better. Being local made it easier. And the response, it's been real
>
> **AMARINDER**

<CONTINUED FROM #57>
beside a train station, there was no insulation from feedback. No margin for error.

Just repetition.

It was shaped there through instinct, iteration and a standard that had to hold every single day.

"We didn't move to change anything. Just to do it better. Being local made it easier. And the response, it's been real. People don't always write reviews, but they come up and tell you. That's what stays with you."

There's a difference between online validation and someone looking you in the eye after a meal.

One scales. The other sharpens you.

Indian cuisine resists neat categorisation.

Reduce it to menu labels and you miss the point entirely. Underneath sits something far more deliberate: heat managed with precision, spices layered in sequence and timing that borders on instinct.

And then there's the tandoor.

A clay oven with more than 5,000 years of history, still unmatched in what it produces. Operating at temperatures above 400°C, it creates a cooking environment that is both unforgiving and precise.

Proteins seal instantly, holding their moisture. The exterior develops a char that is deliberate, not accidental. Marinades bind, caramelise and deepen under pressure.

At Tandoori Joint, the tandoor isn't a feature. It's the foundation.

You don't need to be told that. You taste it.

I kept my order simple.

Achari Paneer Tikka.

Tandoori Soya Chaap.

Two plates. No noise.

Paneer, when treated properly, isn't a fallback. It's a centrepiece. Slow-digesting protein. Rich in calcium. A kind of quiet density that holds you.

It's becoming more mainstream in Australia. You'll see it on menus from Domino's Pizza to Burgertory. Here, though, it's handled with intent. The achari marinade brings a sharp, spiced tang that cuts through the richness without overwhelming it. The outside carries a clean char. The inside stays soft, almost yielding.

A squeeze of lemon lifts it. The green chutney **<TURN TO #59>**







<CONTINUED FROM #58> adds a fresh, herbaceous edge. Suddenly, the whole dish opens up: acid, heat, softness and char, everything working in balance.

The soya chaap is where things shift.

It has that meaty resemblance people often talk about, but more importantly, it delivers. This is a dish that can easily fall flat. Dense. One-dimensional. Not here. The marinade runs through it, not just around it. Every bite carries flavour, not just spice.

It has weight, but no drag.

Paired with the salad, it cuts cleanly through the richness, each bite resetting the next. You finish it and nothing lingers unnecessarily. That's the difference.

Being vegetarian, there's a question that follows you around, sometimes casually, sometimes pointedly:

Where do you get your protein?

It's usually framed as a limitation.

But places like this quietly dismantle that idea.

Paneer. Soya. When handled properly, they're not substitutes. They're complete. Not just nutritionally, but structurally on the plate. They satisfy. They perform.

Amrinder sees it through a different lens:

"As you get older, you realise how important it is to stay active. Muscle is one of the few things you can actually build back. So what you eat matters. I eat here because I know how it's made."

There's no performance in that. No forced positioning.

Just alignment.

The food doesn't try to be "healthy". It simply avoids being careless. High heat. Controlled fat. No excess.

That restraint is what stays with you.

There's a tendency to romanticise small business stories: grind, hustle, scale.

The truth is quieter.

Consistency is the real differentiator.

"If people feel the value of what they've paid for, they come back. That's it. Money follows quality."

It sounds simple. But it demands something most businesses struggle to sustain: the same standard on a slow Tuesday as on a packed Saturday night.

That's where many places slip.

This, though, feels early, not in execution, but in trajectory. Sanket and his partners aren't arriving at something. They're building into it.

Tandoori Joint doesn't feel like a reinvention. It feels like an extension of something already tested under pressure and refined over time.

Same philosophy.

More room to execute.

Melbourne's north doesn't lack options.

But it rarely gets places that operate with this kind of clarity, where flavour doesn't come at the cost of how you feel afterwards.

You don't leave thinking about the décor.

You don't even really think about the menu.

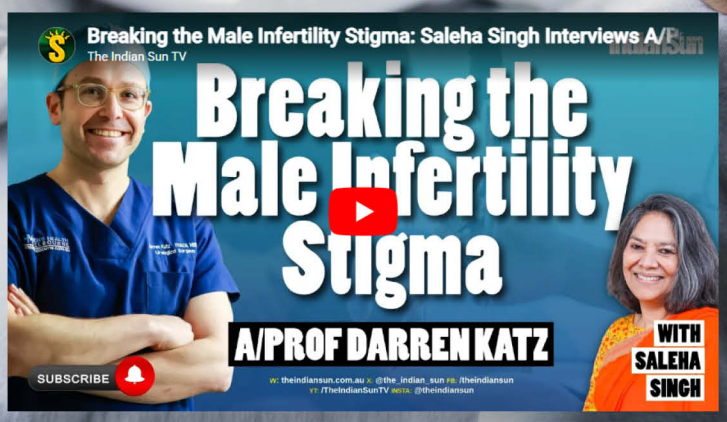
You remember the moment it landed.

And then, almost instinctively, you realise you'll be back.

***Tandoori Joint** is located at Shop 14/270 Donnybrook Road, Mickleham VIC 3064, inside Merrifield City Shopping Centre*

HEALTH

Male fertility often overlooked as couples face pressure to conceive



Scan to watch

Representational Photo by Vitaly Gariev on Unsplash

Male infertility is involved in half of all couples struggling to conceive, yet stigma and shame keep many men from testing, leaving women to carry the burden alone

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Melbourne urologist Associate Professor Darren Katz

Male infertility is contributing to a large share of fertility struggles among Australian couples, with specialists warning that stigma and delayed testing continue to place emotional and medical strain on families.

Melbourne urologist Associate Professor Darren Katz says male factor infertility is present in half of all couples who experience difficulty conceiving and is the sole factor in around 30 per cent of cases.

The issue remains sensitive in many close-knit communities where fertility struggles are still commonly associated with women, despite growing medical evidence pointing to shared reproductive health challenges between partners.

Associate Professor Katz said misconceptions around male fertility remained widespread, particularly the assumption that physical appearance reflected reproductive health.

"A man can appear perfectly healthy externally but still produce zero sperm," he said. "You cannot judge fertility by appearance, because only a tiny fraction of semen volume is actually sperm, the rest is supportive fluid."

He also warned about the growing use of testosterone and steroids among men trying to conceive.

For instance, common gym drugs like testosterone or steroids are actually "poison for sperm and can cause complete infertility", Associate Professor Katz says. Recovery can take six to 12 months after stopping, sometimes longer, while some men may never fully recover fertility.

Even men with naturally low testosterone should avoid testosterone treatment if they are actively trying to conceive or may wish to have children in future, he said, adding that alternative medications could help boost testosterone in a "sperm friendly" way.

Associate Professor Katz also points to varicoceles, enlarged veins in the testicles, as a common contributor to male infertility.

"They are actually the most common cause of secondary infertility, which is when a couple struggles to have a second child after successfully fathering their first," Associate Professor Katz says.

Varicoceles affect around 15 per cent of men and are linked to IVF outcomes and recurrent miscarriages. Australia's new male infertility guidelines devote six separate guideline statements to the condition.

Associate Professor Katz said men also faced age-related fertility decline, although the process was generally less defined than for women.

"Sperm quality undergoes a gradual decline beginning around ages 40 to 50, which brings a small but increased relative risk of genetic issues and autism spectrum disorder in offspring."

He said many men continued to avoid testing because fertility remained closely tied to ideas around masculinity and pride.

"Fear or shame often stops men from getting tested, leaving women to undergo multiple, unnecessary treatments," Associate Professor Katz says.

Australia's first male infertility guidelines, which Associate Professor Katz helped develop, recommend both partners undergo testing together after six to 12 months of actively trying to conceive.

Testing is described as straightforward and non-invasive, with specialists encouraging couples to approach fertility as a shared medical issue rather than assigning blame.

"Attending appointments as a team and recognising that seeking professional counselling is a sign of strength, not weakness, can transform the entire experience."

The pressure placed on couples by extended family and community expectations can further intensify the emotional burden, particularly for migrant families navigating cultural expectations around parenthood.

Associate Professor Katz said couples should focus on making decisions together and avoid external judgement.

"Present a united front. Make decisions based on what is best for the two of you as a couple, not what is best for parents or community expectations."

"There should be no judgment, no blame, and no shame. When couples face this medical issue together with open hearts, it doesn't pull them apart, it actually brings them closer than ever before."

"It's not just period pain": The silent struggle of women living with Endometriosis

DR. PREETI KHILLAN
@the_indian_sun

For too long, women with severe pelvic pain have been dismissed as "normal." Endometriosis affects one in seven, yet countless suffer in silence, told their agony is just stress or part of being female.

THE PAIN WOMEN ARE TOLD TO IGNORE

For many women across Australia, severe pelvic pain is still brushed aside as "normal". Women are expected to continue working, caring for families and managing daily life while silently enduring pain that can be physically and emotionally exhausting. One of the leading causes of this pain is endometriosis, a chronic condition affecting nearly one million Australians, or one in seven women and those assigned female at birth.

Despite how common it is, endometriosis remains widely misunderstood. Many women spend years searching for answers while being told their pain is stress, hormones or simply part of being female.

ANU'S STORY: "I THOUGHT I JUST HAD TO TOLERATE IT"

When Anu* first came to my clinic, she looked exhausted. TURN TO #63

Representational Photo by Ava Sol on Unsplash

Severe pelvic pain is not “normal.” Yet millions of women, especially from multicultural communities, suffer in silence while **endometriosis** goes undiagnosed for years

CONTINUED FROM #62 A hardworking mother balancing a full-time job and family responsibilities, she had spent years hiding her pain from those around her.

Every month, her periods became unbearable. She often curled up on the bathroom floor waiting for the pain to pass, while trying to care for her toddler and continue working. But like many women from multicultural communities, she believed suffering quietly was expected.

Growing up, she had rarely heard open conversations about periods or pelvic pain. She visited doctors and emergency departments several times, tried painkillers and home remedies, yet repeatedly heard the same words: “It’s normal”, “It’s stress”, or “It will settle”.

Only when the pain became so severe that she struggled to lift her child did she finally seek specialist care. After proper assessment, Anu was diagnosed with endometriosis. When she received the diagnosis, she cried with relief.

“Finally,” she said, “someone believes me.”

WHAT EXACTLY IS ENDOMETRIOSIS?

Endometriosis happens when tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside it, around the ovaries, bowel, bladder or pelvis. This can lead to inflammation, scarring and severe pain.

Women may experience painful periods, pelvic pain, heavy bleeding, bowel or bladder problems, pain during intimacy, fatigue and fertility difficulties. What makes the condition especially difficult is that the level of pain does not always match what doctors see on scans or surgery. Some women have severe pain despite only mild disease, while others have extensive disease but fewer symptoms.

This often leads to delays in diagnosis and years of frustration.

WHY MULTICULTURAL WOMEN SUFFER LONGER

For many Indian and multicultural families, menstruation and women’s health are still considered private topics. Girls are often taught to “be strong” and tolerate discomfort quietly. Many women feel embarrassed discussing intimate symptoms or worry they will not be understood.

Language barriers, cultural stigma and busy family responsibilities also stop many women from seeking help early. As one patient told me, “In our culture, women just keep going. We don’t talk about period pain, even when it becomes unbearable.”

The result is years of unnecessary suffering.

THE HIDDEN COST TO FAMILIES, CAREERS AND AUSTRALIA

Endometriosis affects far more than physical health. It impacts education, relationships, mental wellbeing and financial stability. Many women lose workdays every month because they physically cannot function during painful episodes. Some reduce their work hours, leave jobs or miss career opportunities because of chronic pain and fatigue.

Families also carry the burden. Women often continue caring for children and households despite severe symptoms, leading to emotional exhaustion and strain on relationships. Mental health is commonly affected, with many women experiencing anxiety, depression and isolation after years of not being believed.

The condition also carries a major economic cost for Australia through healthcare expenses, repeated hospital visits, surgeries and lost workplace productivity. Billions of dollars are estimated to be lost nationally each year due to endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain.

AUSTRALIA FINALLY LISTENING TO WOMEN

Australia is finally beginning to recognise pelvic pain and endometriosis as serious women’s health issues. A major turning point came with the Victorian Government’s Inquiry into Women’s Pain, where more than 13,000 women, carers and healthcare professionals shared stories of being dismissed, ignored or told their pain was “normal”. The inquiry also highlighted the extra barriers faced by multicultural women, including stigma, language difficulties and lack of culturally sensitive healthcare.

In response, the Australian Government has funded 33 Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinics across the country, including 11 new clinics announced in the 2025–26 Federal Budget. These clinics will provide earlier diagnosis, physiotherapy, counselling, pain management and specialist support closer to home.

Updated national guidelines from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists are also helping doctors diagnose endometriosis earlier using ultrasound and MRI, while recognising that pelvic pain affects emotional wellbeing, family life and mental health, not just the reproductive system.

AWARENESS IS BREAKING THE SILENCE

Every March, Endometriosis Awareness Month helps shine a spotlight on this invisible illness. Campaigns such as March into Yellow and Endo Enlightened encourage Australians to start conversations, wear yellow and support women living with pelvic pain.

Awareness matters because conversations change lives. When families, schools and workplaces understand endometriosis, women seek help earlier and receive better support. Most importantly, awareness helps women realise that severe pain is never something they should simply “put up with”.

A MESSAGE TO EVERY WOMAN LIVING WITH PAIN

If you are experiencing severe period pain, pelvic pain, heavy bleeding, fatigue or pain during intimacy, please know this: your pain is real, and you deserve to be heard.

Anu now has a treatment plan including physiotherapy, medication and emotional support. While her journey continues, she finally feels hopeful.

“I wish I had known earlier that this wasn’t normal,” she recently told me.

My hope is that no woman, especially from Indian and multicultural communities, waits years to hear those same words.

The silence around women’s pain is finally breaking. And that change cannot come soon enough.

Dr Preeti Khillan *is a gynaecologist and women’s health advocate dedicated to supporting multicultural communities and improving early diagnosis and compassionate care for women living with pelvic pain and endometriosis*

Why we must stop saying "Committed Suicide"

DR. RAJ KHILLAN
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Last week, my 15-year-old daughter came home from school deeply upset. She was crying. She was emotional. A student from her school had died by suicide.

As a parent, it was heartbreaking to watch her process something so painful at such a young age. But what stayed with me most were her questions.

"Dad, why are people saying he committed suicide?"

"Did he commit a crime?"

"When someone commits something, doesn't it mean they did something wrong?"

"Did his family do something wrong?"

Her questions were innocent, but they were powerful. In that moment, a child had noticed what many adults have stopped hearing. The phrase "committed suicide" may be common, but it carries the weight of judgement. It sounds like crime. It sounds like sin. It sounds like blame.

And that is exactly why we need to stop using it.

Suicide is not a crime. Suicide is not a moral failure. Suicide is not a disgrace. It is a tragic loss of life, often linked with deep emotional pain, mental distress, trauma, isolation, illness, overwhelming life pressures, or a complex combination of many factors.

In Australia, the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that 3,307 deaths were classified as due to suicide in 2024. The age-standardised suicide rate was 11.8 per 100,000 people. Suicide was the 16th leading cause of death overall, but it **<TURN TO #65>**



Representational Photo by Dev Asangbam on Unsplash

After his 15-year-old daughter asked, "Dad, why are people saying he **committed suicide**?" Dr Raj Khillan explains why we must stop using language that blames and criminalises tragic loss

CONTINUED FROM #64 was the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15 to 44.

Men remain particularly vulnerable. In 2024, 2,529 males died by suicide, accounting for more than three-quarters of all suicide deaths. The male suicide rate was more than three times the female rate. The Northern Territory recorded the highest suicide rate among Australian jurisdictions.

Behind every number is a human being. A child. A parent. A sibling. A friend. A classmate. A colleague. A family left with grief, unanswered questions and, too often, silence.

THE HISTORY HIDDEN IN THE WORD "COMMITTED"

The word "commit" carries heavy baggage — murder, theft, fraud, adultery, crime or sin. For generations, suicide was viewed through religion, criminal law and moral judgement. The Australian Psychological Society argues suicide is not a sin or crime, so we should stop saying people "commit" suicide. The word has historically been linked to religious offences, criminal acts and involuntary detention in mental institutions.

In England and Wales, suicide was decriminalised under the Suicide Act 1961. In Australia, it is no longer a crime in any jurisdiction. India's law has also moved away from punishment. Section 115 of the Mental Healthcare Act 2017 presumes a person who attempts suicide is under severe stress and should not be tried or punished. It also places a duty on government to provide care, treatment and rehabilitation.

The law has changed. Our language must catch up.

WHY THIS WORD HURTS FAMILIES

When a person dies by suicide, the family is often left with unimaginable pain. They may ask: What did we miss? Could we have helped? Why did this happen? In many multicultural communities, including Indian and South Asian, this pain is worsened by stigma. Families may fear gossip, judgement, religious condemnation, or blame. Some avoid open discussion.

The phrase "committed suicide" adds to that burden. It can make grieving families feel their loved one did something shameful. It can make parents feel accused, siblings feel they must hide the truth, and classmates feel confused. Research warns that words such as "committed", "successful", "failed" and "completed" increase stigma, blame and distress for those experiencing suicidal thoughts or bereaved by suicide.

Mindframe, Australia's national guidance for safe communication, identifies "committed suicide" as problematic because it associates suicide with crime or sin. Preferred alternatives include "took their own life" and "died by suicide". Mindframe also advises against phrases such as "successful suicide", "unsuccessful suicide", "failed suicide" and "suicide bid".

SUICIDE IS COMPLEX, BUT THE BLAME IS TOO SIMPLE

One of the most harmful myths is that suicide is caused by one single event: a failed exam, a relationship breakdown, financial pressure, family conflict or bullying. These events may contribute, but suicide is usually far more complex.

The World Health Organization identifies multiple risk factors, including mental health conditions, previous suicide attempts, loss, loneliness, discrimination, relationship disputes, financial problems, chronic pain, illness, violence, abuse and crisis situations. WHO also notes that stigma around mental health and suicide stops many people from seeking help, and that suicides and suicide attempts have ripple effects across families, friends, colleagues and communities.

That is why blame is not only unfair; it is dangerous. Blame closes conversations. Compassion opens them.

When we speak about suicide as if it is a crime, people in distress may feel ashamed to ask for help. When we speak about it with care, people may feel safer to say, "I am struggling."

WHAT SHOULD WE SAY INSTEAD?

We do not need complicated language. We need humane language.

Instead of "committed suicide", say "died by suicide".

Instead of "successful suicide", say "died by suicide".

Instead of "failed suicide attempt", say "suicide attempt" or "non-fatal suicide attempt".

Instead of "a suicidal person", say "a person experiencing suicidal thoughts".

Instead of "attention-seeking", say "a person in distress".

Instead of "weak" or "selfish", say "someone who needed support".

Even "completed suicide" is not ideal. "Completion" sounds like achievement. Death should never be framed as success, failure or completion.

A study of three leading suicide-specific academic journals found that 34% of articles published between 2000 and 2015 used the word stem "commit" when describing suicide or self-harm, although its use declined from 33% in 2000 to 13% in 2015. The authors called for outdated and stigma-laden terms to be removed from scientific literature.

That change should not remain only in academic journals. It must reach homes, schools, medical clinics, newsrooms, temples, churches, mosques, community groups and WhatsApp conversations.

A MESSAGE FOR PARENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Children notice the words adults use. When a suicide death affects a school community, young people need honest, age-appropriate conversations. They need reassurance that grief is normal. They need adults who don't panic, minimise, sensationalise or silence discussion. Don't say, "Don't talk about it." Say, "I am here. You are not alone."

For Indian and migrant families, this is especially important. We speak proudly about success and family honour, but not comfortably about depression or suicidal thoughts. Silence may feel protective, but it can isolate those who need help most.

Changing language won't prevent every suicide, but it changes the conversation. It tells a grieving family: we don't blame you. It tells a young person in distress: you are not a criminal or disgrace, and help is available. It tells our children: pain deserves compassion, not judgement.

My daughter asked: "Why committed?" Maybe every adult should pause and ask the same question. Why use a word of crime and shame for a tragedy needing care and understanding? Let's stop saying "committed suicide." Let's say: died by suicide. And more importantly, let's build a society where people in pain feel safe to say, "I need help."

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.*

If this article raises concerns for you or someone you know, support is available in Australia 24/7: Lifeline 13 11 14, Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467, MensLine Australia 1300 789 978, Kids Helpline 1800 551 800, and StandBy Support After Suicide 1300 727 247. In an emergency, call 000

The vaccine-autism myth still hurts families today

DR. RAJ KHILLAN
𝕏 @the_indian_sun

I still remember one family very clearly.

Their first child had autism. When their second child came due for routine vaccinations, fear took hold. Between community whispers, social media videos and old myths shared on family WhatsApp groups, the parents became convinced that vaccines might "trigger" autism. They delayed vaccination.

Later, while travelling to India, their young child contracted measles and became seriously unwell, requiring hospital treatment for secondary pneumonia. The illness eventually passed. The emotional wound did not.

The parents were left carrying something heavier than fear: guilt.

That is the real damage caused by the autism-vaccine myth. It does not merely spread bad science. It undermines confidence, delays important decisions and leaves children vulnerable to very real diseases.

THE LIE THAT TRAVELLED THE WORLD

The fear can be traced to a paper published in the United Kingdom in 1998 by Andrew Wakefield and colleagues. The study involved only 12 children and suggested a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. **<TURN TO #67>**



Representational Photo by Jordan Whitt on Unsplash

How a fake UK study created a myth that still hurts families, fuels fear and puts children at risk: a paediatrician recalls a family who delayed vaccines, only to watch their child suffer severe measles overseas

❮CONTINUED FROM #66❯

The paper attracted enormous attention. The science behind it later collapsed.

The Lancet retracted the study. A major investigation by the BMJ described the work as fraudulent. Wakefield was removed from the UK medical register.

Yet even after the study was discredited, the myth survived.

That is the trouble with fear. Once it enters family conversations, it can outlive facts for decades.

In December 2025, the World Health Organization again reviewed the evidence and reaffirmed that vaccines do not cause autism. WHO stated that the available evidence shows no causal link. Yet many parents are still hearing the old lie more loudly than the new truth.

THE SCIENCE IS NOT UNCERTAIN

This question has been examined repeatedly through large, high-quality studies conducted in multiple countries.

A major meta-analysis involving more than 1.2 million children found no relationship between vaccination and autism. A large Danish study published in 2019 followed 657,461 children and again found that MMR vaccination did not increase the risk of autism, including among children considered at higher risk.

Earlier population studies reached the same conclusion.

This is not a debate in which both sides carry equal evidence. They do not.

The claim has been tested repeatedly, and it has repeatedly failed.

WHY PARENTS GET CONFUSED

One reason the myth persists is timing.

Autism signs often become more noticeable during the second year of life. Some children may also experience developmental regression during the preschool years, including a loss of words, social engagement or play skills.

During the same period, measles-containing vaccines are routinely given in Australia at 12 and 18 months of age.

When two events occur around the same time, worried parents can understandably connect them, even when one did not cause the other.

That is where calm medical guidance matters.

Parents are not foolish for noticing timing. They are human. But timing alone is not proof.

A child's autism may become clearer around the same period as vaccination, yet the vaccine is not the cause.

AUTISM DOES NOT HAVE ONE SINGLE CAUSE

Another reason the myth spreads so easily is that autism does not come with one neat explanation.

The best available evidence suggests autism is multifactorial, shaped by a complex combination of genetic and early developmental influences rather than a single trigger after birth.

That uncertainty can be uncomfortable for families.

A simple explanation such as "it was the vaccine" can feel easier to accept than acknowledging that human development is complex and that science is still learning. Yet what feels easier is not necessarily true.

Autism is also common.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported 290,900 autistic Australians in 2022, including 4.3 per cent of children aged five to 14.

Greater awareness and improved recognition mean more families are receiving answers and support. That should not be twisted into a false vaccine narrative.

WHY THIS MYTH CAN HIT MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES HARDER

In culturally and linguistically diverse communities, vaccine concerns often become entangled with other pressures: stigma surrounding diagnosis, fear of judgement, conflicting information from overseas, language barriers and difficulty navigating the Australian health system.

Some families may place greater trust in advice from relatives overseas than in information provided by local health authorities. Others may encounter anti-vaccination content in their home language on social media long before they have an opportunity to discuss their concerns with a healthcare professional.

Australian research has identified persistent misconceptions about routine childhood vaccination. These concerns are often more common among younger parents and those who speak a language other than English at home. Studies have also found that social media plays a powerful role in shaping vaccination decisions.

This is why culturally sensitive communication matters.

Families do not need lectures or judgement. They need clear, trusted information delivered in plain language and with respect for their concerns, experiences and cultural backgrounds.

WHAT CHILDREN LOSE WHEN VACCINES ARE DELAYED

When vaccination is delayed, the risk is not theoretical.

Measles remains one of the most contagious infectious diseases in the world. Australia has eliminated ongoing local transmission, but cases still occur, mostly linked to overseas travel.

In recent weeks, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland have all issued measles alerts. Victoria reported this month that 17 measles cases had already been notified in 2026.

There are less visible consequences as well.

In Victoria, children generally need to be up to date with immunisations to enrol in early childhood education and care under the No Jab No Play policy, unless they are on an approved catch-up pathway or hold a valid exemption.

Delayed vaccination can mean missed time in childcare or kindergarten, missed learning opportunities, reduced social interaction and fewer opportunities for educators to identify developmental concerns and guide families towards support services.

WHAT PARENTS REALLY DESERVE

Parents deserve honesty, not fear.

Vaccines do not cause autism. Autism is not caused by poor parenting. Blaming vaccines does nothing to help a child with autism.

It simply distracts families from what matters most: recognising developmental signs early, seeking support when it is needed and protecting children from preventable diseases.

Vaccines did not cause autism.

Yet the myth linking the two continues to cause harm.

In multicultural Australia, where trust can be fragile and misinformation can travel quickly across borders and languages, that message needs to be communicated clearly, respectfully and repeatedly.

For some families, understanding that truth may be the difference between fear and protection.

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*

Flu, RSV and COVID-19 this winter: what families should know to stay safe

DR HABIB BHURAWALA
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Last winter in Western Sydney, I saw a young child brought to hospital with what initially looked like a routine viral illness. The family had managed the symptoms at home for several days, assuming it was a common cold. By the time they came to hospital, the child was struggling to breathe and was diagnosed with an RSV infection.

What stood out was not the virus itself, but the timing. The family was caring and attentive, but like many families, they were unsure when a common respiratory illness becomes something more serious.

Having trained and worked across India and Australia, and within different health systems and communities, I have seen how language, cultural expectations and health literacy shape how families understand illness and decide when to seek care. These are not simply knowledge gaps. They often relate to access, communication and confidence in navigating the health system.

Each winter across Australia, flu, RSV and COVID-19 circulate more widely, and these challenges become more visible.

Public health guidance explains that respiratory viruses spread more easily in colder months due to increased indoor contact in homes, schools and workplaces:

https://www.vic.gov.au/stay-well-winter

<TURN TO #69>



Representational Photo

Last winter in Western Sydney, a child with RSV arrived struggling to breathe. A/Prof Dr Habib Bhurawala explains why families need clear guidance on **when a common virus becomes serious**

CONTINUED FROM #68

WHY WINTER VIRUSES ARE NOT "JUST A COLD"

Influenza, RSV and COVID-19 often begin with similar symptoms — fever, cough, sore throat and tiredness. Because of this, many people assume they are mild illnesses.

In most cases, people recover at home. However, these infections can sometimes become serious.

RSV can cause breathing difficulties in infants. Influenza can lead to pneumonia in older adults. COVID-19 can still result in severe illness in people with underlying medical conditions.

For families, the challenge is not recognising the virus itself, but recognising when symptoms are worsening.

VACCINATION REMAINS THE STRONGEST PROTECTION

Health authorities across Australia continue to recommend vaccination as the most effective way to reduce severe illness from flu and COVID-19.

The flu vaccine is recommended every year for everyone aged six months and over, and it is free for many groups under the National Immunisation Program. COVID-19 vaccination is also recommended, particularly for people at higher risk of severe illness.

For reliable information, the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) provides evidence-based guidance on vaccines and safety: https://ncirs.org.au/influenza/influenza-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions-faqs

The Australian Government Department of Health also provides updated immunisation information:



A/Prof Dr Habib Bhurawala

https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation

Short educational videos explaining winter viruses and vaccination are available through Australian Government health resources:

https://www.health.gov.au/childhood-immunisation/resources/videos/what-is-influenza-why-childhood-immunisation-are-important

https://www.health.gov.au/maternal-vaccinations/resources/videos/rsv-expert-video-with-dr-linny-kimly-phuong

https://www.health.gov.au/resources/videos

RSV prevention options are also now available for some infants and older adults, depending on eligibility.

Vaccination does not prevent every infection, but it significantly reduces the risk of severe illness and hospital admission.

WHEN FAMILIES SHOULD SEEK MEDICAL CARE

Most respiratory infections can be managed safely at home with rest, fluids and monitoring. Medical advice should be sought if there are warning signs such as:

- difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- persistent high fever
- chest pain or worsening cough
- unusual drowsiness or confusion
- in children, poor feeding, dehydration or reduced responsiveness

Infants, older adults and people with chronic medical conditions should be assessed earlier rather than later.

Early medical review can prevent deterioration and reduce hospital admissions.

WHY SOME FAMILIES ARE AFFECTED DIFFERENTLY

In multicultural communities, several everyday factors influence how winter illness is experienced:

- multigenerational households, increasing spread between age groups
- language barriers affecting understanding of when to seek care
- difficulty accessing timely GP appointments during peak winter periods
- reliance on informal advice before seeking medical assessment

These are not simply issues of awareness. They reflect how effectively health services connect with communities in practice.

Improving communication, access and culturally appropriate care remains essential in reducing avoidable hospital presentations.

WHAT THIS WINTER SHOULD REMIND US

The child who arrived late to hospital with RSV is not an isolated case. Similar situations occur every winter across Australia.

The message for families is clear:

- vaccination helps reduce risk
- early recognition of worsening symptoms matters
- timely medical care makes a difference

Winter respiratory illness is not only about viruses. It is also about how quickly families can recognise illness and access care when needed.

As winter progresses, the focus should be on preventing severe illness, not just managing infections, and ensuring families have the information and support to act early.

*The article is authored by **A/Prof Dr Habib Bhurawala**, who serves as the Head of Department and Clinical Associate Professor of Paediatrics at Nepean Hospital in New South Wales, Australia*



Art Gallery of NSW to unveil landmark Vishnu exhibition



More than 200 works across 1,500 years explore **Vishnu's many forms** in the **Art Gallery of NSW**'s landmark exhibition opening June

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun



More than 200 works tracing 1,500 years of artistic interpretations of **Vishnu** will go on display at the **Art Gallery of New South Wales** this June, as the institution prepares to open its most extensive presentation of South and Southeast Asian art in more than two decades.

Titled *Avatar: Forms of Vishnu*, the exhibition brings together ancient sculptures, paintings, textiles, photography and contemporary installations from collections across Asia, Europe and Australia. It is also the first exhibition in Australia dedicated to Vishnu, one of Hinduism's principal deities.

Opening on 20 June, the exhibition examines how generations of artists across South and Southeast Asia have interpreted Vishnu and his avatars through shifting cultural, political and spiritual contexts. The show includes loans from major institutions including the British Museum, Ashmolean Museum and the National Museum of Cambodia, with several works travelling to Australia for the first time.

Gallery director Maud Page described the exhibition as one of the institution's most ambitious recent projects, pointing to its scale and the breadth of storytelling represented across centuries of artistic practice.

"Through Avatar, we open a deeper way of seeing and understanding this rich and captivating subject," she said.

The exhibition has been curated by senior curator 〈TURN TO #73〉

The exhibition has been curated by senior curator of Asian art Melanie Eastburn alongside Chaitanya Sambrani from the Australian National University



India 'Lotus-clad Radha and Krishna' c1700–10, opaque watercolour on paper, 21.9 x 16.2 cm image; 28.6 x 21.3 cm sheet, Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 2007







CONTINUED FROM #71 of Asian art Melanie Eastburn alongside Chaitanya Sambrani from the Australian National University. Both say the project was shaped with an awareness that Vishnu's stories remain central to the lives and beliefs of millions of people today, while also continuing to inspire contemporary artistic practice.

Within Hindu traditions, Vishnu is regarded as the preserver of cosmic order, appearing in different forms to restore balance during periods of turmoil. The exhibition follows these transformations through figures including Matsya the fish, Narasimha the man-lion, Krishna and Rama, as well as Mohini, Vishnu's female avatar.

Among the historical highlights are rare illustrated pages from early Ramayana and Mahabharata manuscripts created during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar in the late 16th century. Their inclusion reflects the exchanges between Islamic court culture and Hindu mythology during that period.

Other works include a sixth-century Cambodian sculpture depicting Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana and a recently restored seventh-century Cambodian sculpture representing Vishnu's horse-headed avatar, appearing publicly in Australia for the first time.

Contemporary artists feature strongly throughout the exhibition. New commissions include large-scale paintings by Desmond Lazaro inspired by the Hindu creation story known as the Churning of the Ocean of Milk, alongside an intricate lace installation by Sumakshi Singh exploring the story of Narasimha.

Singh is among the artists representing India at this year's Venice Biennale.

Artists including Nalini Malani, Pushpamala N, Gulammohammed Sheikh and Jumaadi also feature in the exhibition.

Eastburn said the stories surrounding Vishnu's avatars have long existed across multiple forms of expression, from devotion and philosophy to theatre and popular storytelling.

Sambrani added that artists working with these narratives have often used them to explore emotional, ethical and political questions relevant to their own societies and historical moments.

The exhibition arrives as Australian galleries and museums continue expanding their engagement with Asian art and diasporic audiences. Institutions across the country have faced growing calls in recent years for broader representation of non-Western art histories within major programming, alongside deeper collaboration with communities connected to the works on display.

Avatar: Forms of Vishnu *runs at the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 20 June until October 2026. Tickets are now on sale.*

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ACMI celebrates screen culture, Play School, and The Vinyl Factory

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ACMI is Australia's museum of screen culture, dedicated to watching, playing, making and discovering the universe of screen-based art, film, television and videogames. Located in Melbourne's Fed Square, ACMI offers a dynamic cultural experience featuring interactive exhibitions, curated cinema screenings, workshops and talks, as well as a shop dedicated to screen culture and design. Visitors can also enjoy food and drink at the ACMI Cafe + Bar.

At the centre of ACMI is the free permanent exhibition The Story of the Moving Image, which spans time and cultures to explore the screen-based works that have shaped and transformed the world across film, television, videogames and digital media.

ACMI Cinemas bring world-class film programming to the heart of Melbourne's CBD, showcasing award contenders, festival favourites, international releases, and rare or rediscovered works not easily found elsewhere. The cinemas offer audiences the chance to experience the magic of cinema on the big screen, from contemporary highlights to hidden gems.

ACMI also presents a range of major temporary exhibitions and cultural collaborations. The Vinyl Factory: Reverb, presented in partnership with RISING, is a journey into sound and music culture, open from 22 May to 31 August. Featuring leading contemporary artists including Stan Douglas, Jenn Nkiru, William Kentridge, Jeremy Deller, Virgil Abloh, Kahlil Joseph, Gabriel Moses, Cecilia Bengolea, Juliannknxx and Carsten Nicolai, the exhibition celebrates 20 years of artistic collaboration through immersive installations, sculptural sound systems, remixable vinyl experiences, and archival works exploring the intersections of music, art, film and social movements. A dedicated Listening Room offers a curated vinyl experience for deep listening in an acoustically refined environment, alongside special after-hours sessions with local and international artists.

For younger audiences, Play School: Come and Play! celebrates 60 years of one of Australia's most beloved television programs. Open until 12 July, the exhibition invites children aged 2–5 and their families to step behind the scenes of Play School, taking on roles such as presenter, camera operator or director. Through hands-on activities, songs, storytelling and imaginative play including climbing aboard the Rocket Clock—children explore how the show is made in a joyful, interactive environment developed in collaboration with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Together, these experiences reflect ACMI's mission to connect audiences with screen culture across generations, genres and formats, fostering creativity, participation and discovery.

More info here: ***https://www.acmi.net.au/whats-on/***



Meet the Indian-Australian teen shaking up squash



The Indian-Australian dream has long been written in textbooks, stethoscopes, and engineering blueprints. But **Joanne Joseph** is rewriting it on a squash court





OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

In many Indian-Australian families, success is still most commonly imagined through academics, medicine, engineering or law. Elite sport, especially in a niche game like squash, is rarely the expected path.

But 18-year-old **Joanne Joseph** is quietly reshaping that narrative.

Currently ranked No. 2 in the Girls U19 Australian rankings, the Melbourne teenager is set to represent Australia at the World Junior Squash Championships in Canada this July — her third appearance on the world stage and her final year in juniors. It comes after a remarkable season that saw her crowned Australian Junior Open champion on her home courts in Melbourne this April.

For Joanne, the journey began simply enough at the age of 10, inspired by her father. "I just 〈TURN TO #77〉



> There's pressure going into big tournaments, especially now because it's my last year in juniors. If you don't win them now, you don't get another chance
>
> **JOANNE JOSEPH**

CONTINUED FROM #76 started because I liked it," she says.

There were no grand plans then. Just a child who enjoyed being on court. But over time, squash stopped being an after-school activity and became part of the rhythm of her life. School holidays revolved around tournaments. Training sessions became routine. Slowly, ambition grew alongside the game.

This year brought the biggest moment of her career so far. At the Australian Junior Open at MSAC in Albert Park, Joanne finally captured the title that had eluded her the year before, when she lost the final in a gruelling five-set match. Going into this year's final, she knew it was her last chance before moving into senior competition.

When the winning moment came, emotion took over. "I shook my opponent's hand and just started crying," she recalls. "I was overwhelmed. I couldn't believe I'd done it."

The title added to an already impressive resume. Joanne has represented Australia at multiple World Junior Championships, captained the Australian Trans-Tasman team, reached the semi-finals of the Kuala Lumpur Junior International Open and won the Oceania Under-17 title.

Recognition has followed beyond the court too.

She was awarded the Sport Australia Hall of Fame 2026 Tier 3 Scholarship, a prestigious athlete mentoring and development program. She also received the 2025 School Sport Victoria Academic and Sporting Achievement Medal and an Australian Olympic Change-Maker nomination from the Australian Olympic Committee.

Yet Joanne speaks less about trophies and more about perseverance. She openly admits the mental side of elite sport has often been the toughest challenge.

"There's pressure going into big tournaments," she says. "Especially now because it's my last year in juniors. If you don't win them now, you don't get another chance."

There were periods, particularly at international tournaments, when confidence did not come easily. "I never thought I'd actually end up winning the Australian Junior Open," she says. "When I was younger, I wasn't one of the top juniors. I just kept showing up."

That persistence defines much of her story.

At the same time, Joanne has balanced elite sport with academic achievement — something many Indian-Australian families deeply value. While competing nationally and internationally, she completed Year 12 as Vice Captain at school and achieved strong academic results.

Now studying a Bachelor of Science at the University of Melbourne, she hopes to eventually pursue postgraduate medicine.

For Joanne, academics and sport have never been rivals. They simply demanded discipline and careful balance. Last year, during her final school exams, she deliberately scaled back squash training to focus on achieving a strong ATAR. Once exams were over, she returned fully to competition.

Her family, she says, has been central to the journey. "You can't really do it alone," she says. "It takes a lot of people to help you get where you want to go."

That support system will travel with her in spirit this July when she steps onto the courts in Canada wearing Australian colours once again.

Beyond that lies the transition into the senior professional ranks, where the competition becomes even tougher. Joanne speaks realistically about the road ahead. The Commonwealth Games and Brisbane 2032 Olympics remain long-term dreams.

But for now, she is focused on the next match, the next tournament and the next step forward.

And perhaps that is what makes her story resonate beyond sport itself.

Not just the rankings or titles, but the quiet determination of a young Indian-Australian athlete who kept turning up long before the victories arrived.

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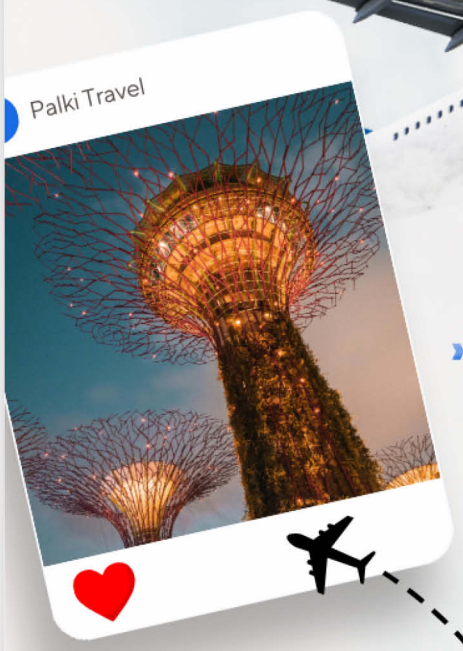
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