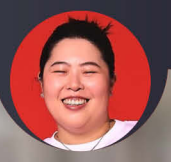
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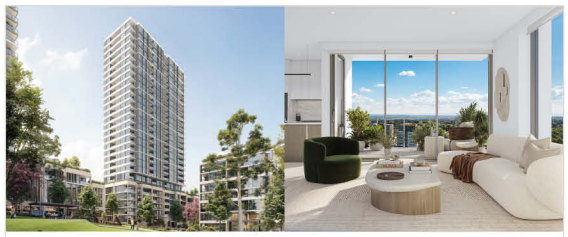
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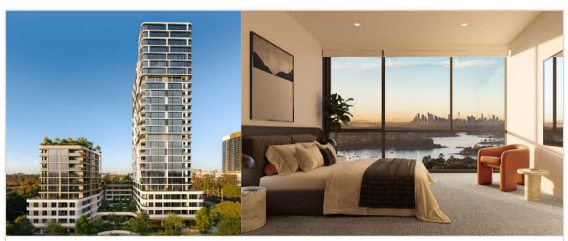
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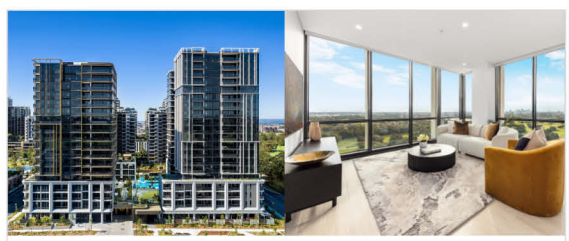
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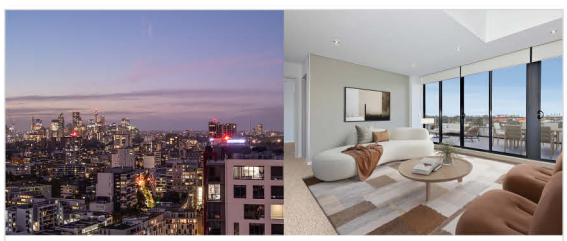
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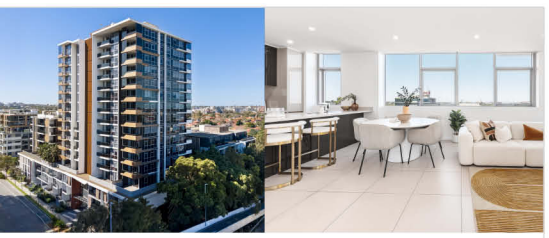
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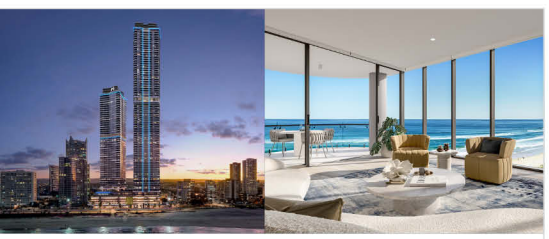
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- ***Hasya (IBDP Student)***



"The International Baccalaureate (IB) develops lifelong learners who thrive and make a difference."

EDITOR'S NOTE

WAITING FOR ANSWERS



Dear Readers,

September begins on a sombre note.

The disaster unfolding across Nepal and Tibet has become painfully close to home for many Australian families. At the time of writing, 43 Australians remain unaccounted for after catastrophic floods swept through the Nepal-Tibet border region, destroying settlements, roads, bridges and communications.

No Australian deaths have been publicly confirmed, and families continue to hope that some of those missing may have reached higher ground or areas where communications remain down.

Many were returning from pilgrimages to Mount Kailash when the floods struck the Gyirong border area. Among them are Indian Australian families, children and other pilgrims whose relatives are now enduring an agonising wait for information.

The geography has made an already difficult search more complicated. Some Australians may have been in Nepal, others in Tibet, and it remains unclear where several travellers were when the floodwaters struck. Families have called for greater cooperation between Australian, Nepali and Chinese authorities as they try to establish what happened.

Australia has increased its humanitarian assistance to $8 million and deployed crisis-response officers, consular staff and Australian Federal Police personnel to Kathmandu. Australian Defence Force support is also being used to deliver emergency supplies requested by Nepal.

These figures and circumstances may have changed by the time this edition reaches readers. We sincerely hope they have, and that there is better news to report.

For us, this is not simply an international disaster story. The names and faces emerging belong to families from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and elsewhere. People who left Australia on a spiritual journey are now at the centre of an international search spanning some of the most difficult terrain in the world.

It is a reminder that distance means very little when tragedy touches a community. Our thoughts remain with every family waiting for news, as well as the people of Nepal and Tibet who have suffered an enormous loss.

We will continue reporting developments online as information is confirmed.

Back home, September brings a different uncertainty for Australian households.

July's inflation figures have strengthened the case for another interest rate rise, even as other parts of the economy show signs of weakness. Annual inflation has fallen from 4.6 per cent in March to 3.5 per cent in July, but prices rose sharply during July itself. Economists and financial markets are now divided over what the Reserve Bank should do next.

The difficulty is easy to understand. Inflation remains too high, but unemployment has risen, wage growth has slowed and housing demand is weakening. Another rate rise may help bring inflation down faster, but it would also increase mortgage repayments, reduce borrowing capacity and put further pressure on household spending.

The Reserve Bank meets again at the end of September. Its decision will matter well beyond financial markets. For families managing mortgages, rents, school fees, groceries and energy bills, monetary policy is experienced through the household budget.

This is why our Index series, drawing on The Balance Sheet research, continues to examine interest rates, housing, credit and the economy in plain English. These subjects can sound technical, but their consequences are anything but.

Our September cover offers a welcome change of pace.

It tells the story of Bipen Sharma, who arrived in Australia in his early twenties without savings or connections and found work cooking steaks at the Hilton despite being a vegetarian. He eventually moved from restaurants into making the Indian dairy products he could not find at the quality he wanted. Three decades later, Sharma's Kitchen employs more than 100 people and has built a business spanning Australia and Europe.

Now the journey is taking the family back to Punjab. A new factory near Amritsar, close to where Bipen grew up, is expected to open in 2027.

It is also a story about the next generation. Bipen's children, Tanisha and Akaash, were required to start at the bottom of the family business before taking on senior roles. What began with two varieties of raita made for a Sydney restaurant has become a family enterprise operating across continents.

September brings grief and uncertainty from Nepal, difficult economic questions at home and the story of an Australian migrant family that spent three decades quietly building a business.

Best wishes,
SIDDHARTH SURESH

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SCAN TO READ POST



Arix Bishnoi, President of the Association of Australian Rajasthanis Inc., joins the celebrations as the organisation begins a new chapter with its newly elected committee. Photo supplied

Arix Bishnoi takes helm of Australian Rajasthanis

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The **Association of Australian Rajasthanis Inc.** has elected a new working committee following its Annual General Meeting, with the organisation set to continue its focus on cultural activities and community connections across Victoria.

The new committee will be led by Arix Bishnoi as President, with Sanjay Rajpurohit serving as Vice President, Devendra Singh Khangarot as Secretary and Virendra Khatana as Treasurer. Vandana Rathore and Vinay Khandelwal have been appointed Public Relations Officers.

The Annual General Meeting gave registered members an opportunity to review the association's activities and achievements before electing the committee for the next term.

Mr Bishnoi said he was honoured to take on the presidency and would work with members to create more opportunities for participation and connection.

"Our aim is to work together as a community and create more opportunities for people to connect, participate and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Rajasthan," he said.

The association has organised cultural celebrations, social gatherings and community initiatives aimed at bringing members together and introducing Rajasthani traditions to the wider community.

Mr Bishnoi said the new committee would also seek to strengthen relationships with multicultural organisations across Victoria.

"We also want to build stronger relationships with other multicultural organisations and communities across Victoria," he said.

"Rajasthan has a rich history, traditions, music, dance, food and arts, and we want to share that heritage TURN TO #11

> Rajasthan has a rich history, traditions, music, dance, food and arts, and we want to share that heritage with the wider Australian community
>
> **ARIX BISHNOI**

> Our community has a lot to offer, and together we can showcase the best of Rajasthan while contributing positively to Australia's wonderfully diverse multicultural society

ARIX BISHNOI



The newly elected committee of the Association of Australian Rajasthanis Inc., coming together to celebrate community, culture and a new term of leadership in Victoria. Photo supplied

CONTINUED FROM #10 with the wider Australian community."

The committee has identified collaboration and community participation as priorities for the coming term. It also plans to support activities that encourage younger members to stay connected with their cultural heritage while creating opportunities to work with other community organisations.

The association's cultural programmes offer members an opportunity to maintain connections with Rajasthan while giving the broader community a chance to learn about its traditions, arts and food.

Outgoing committee members and volunteers were acknowledged for their contributions to the organisation and its activities.

With the new committee now in place, the Association of Australian Rajasthanis Inc. will continue its work as a cultural and community organisation in Victoria, with the new leadership team looking to build on existing activities and expand community participation.

"Our community has a lot to offer, and together we can showcase the best of Rajasthan while contributing positively to Australia's wonderfully diverse multicultural society," Mr Bishnoi said.





Representational Photo by Oxk on Unsplash

Does the Census miss Australia's Hindi speakers?

SCAN TO READ POST

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

Hindi is not being accurately represented in Australian Census data because the question on language does not capture the multilingual reality of Indian-Australian households, according to community advocate Dr Subhash Sharma.

Sharma, the current president and a founding member of Hindi Shiksha Sangh Inc. Australia, has been organising Hindi literary activities for more than 25 years. He argues that many Australians of Indian background speak three or more languages, typically their mother tongue, Hindi and English, but Census figures may capture only one of those languages.

"The question in the form is not appropriate," Sharma tells *The Indian Sun*. "Every Indian knows at least three languages—their mother tongue, Hindi and English. Almost all have a working knowledge of Hindi, but it is not recorded."

The Australian Census asks people about the language they use at home other than English. Sharma believes this can produce an incomplete picture, 〈TURN TO #13〉

> The question in the form is not appropriate. Every Indian knows at least three languages—their mother tongue, Hindi and English. Almost all have a working knowledge of Hindi, but it is not recorded
>
> **DR SUBHASH SHARMA**

CONTINUED FROM #12 particularly among migrant communities where several languages may be used regularly.

He points to Punjabi speakers as an example. A person may nominate Punjabi as the language spoken at home but also regularly speak and understand Hindi.

Whether at Indian community events, temples, watching films and sport, or listening to visiting Indian leaders, Hindi or Hindustani is often used as a common language between Indians from different linguistic backgrounds, he said.

The same applies to people who nominate Gujarati or another Indian language in the Census.

"You may write Gujarati as your home language, but the reality is that many people speak a mixture of Gujarati, Hindi and English," Sharma said.

He also questions how the Census reflects households where partners have different linguistic backgrounds.

"A husband and wife may use two different languages. Why should one influence the other?" he said.

Sharma believes the issue has consequences beyond where Hindi sits on a list of Australia's most commonly spoken languages.



Dr Subhash Sharma

Census information is widely used by governments and organisations to understand communities and plan services. If multilingual Australians cannot adequately record the languages they speak, he argues, governments may not have a complete picture when considering language services and resources.

Government agencies have previously pointed to Census responses as the basis for language statistics, leaving it to individuals to accurately report the language they use at home.

But Sharma argues that this is precisely the problem: people cannot provide a complete answer if the question itself allows only a limited picture of their language use.

He would like the Indian-Australian community to discuss the issue and reach a common position on how multilingual ability should be recognised.

The aim, he said, is not to diminish Punjabi, Gujarati or any of India's many other languages, but to recognise that many people speak their mother tongue while also using Hindi as a common language.

He hopes community members will raise their concerns with the relevant Australian authorities and push for future Census questions to better reflect multilingual households.

"Hindi is the language that connects many languages," Sharma said.

For him, the issue is less about Hindi competing with other Indian languages and more about whether Australia's Census is keeping pace with the increasingly multilingual communities it is trying to measure.





Mackay came together for Rath Yatra at Mulherin Park, celebrating Indian culture, tradition and community spirit with a colourful procession, traditional music and a shared Mahaprasad meal. Photos supplied

Mackay community gathers for Rath Yatra at Mulherin Park

SCAN TO READ POST

NICK ATTAM
@the_indian_sun

Around 180 people gathered at Mulherin Park in Mackay Harbour on Saturday, 8 August, for a **Rath Yatra** celebrating Indian culture, tradition and community connections.

Organised by BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Mackay, the event brought families and friends together for a traditional procession featuring a decorated chariot, followed by cultural celebrations and a shared vegetarian meal. **<TURN TO #15>**



‹CONTINUED FROM #14›

The celebration was held in the presence of Pujya Aarshpurush Swami and Pujya Brahmasmaran Swami. Special guests included Nigel Dalton MP, Dr Sanjeev Bandi, Executive Council Committee Member of the Mackay Indian Association, and Mackay Harbour Surf Club Manager Stan Ridland and his wife Jenifer.

Rath Yatra is a long-standing Indian tradition associated with values including equality, harmony, compassion and togetherness. Events such as the Mackay celebration also offer an opportunity for people unfamiliar with the tradition to experience aspects of Indian culture and connect with members of the local Indian community.

The event relied on the involvement of volunteers and families, who helped organise the procession and activities throughout the afternoon.

For Mackay, the gathering provided a space for members of the Indian community to celebrate a tradition while inviting people from the wider community to take part.

The afternoon ended with Mahaprasad, a vegetarian meal shared among attendees, bringing the community gathering to a close.









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Navodaya Sydney celebrates Onam 2026 with community gathering

SCAN TO READ POST

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Navodaya Sydney has thanked the Malayalee community and supporters who helped make its Onam 2026 celebration one of its largest cultural gatherings of the year, with community leaders, guests and volunteers coming together for the event held on 2 August.

The celebration featured cultural performances, community activities and traditional Onam festivities, with NSW State Member for Granville Julia Finn MP attending as Chief Guest. Finn later shared that she was pleased to join Navodaya Sydney and the Malayalee community for the celebration and was delighted to reconnect with Beena from Bdesign Sarees, who had sold her the Kerala saree she wore to the event several years ago.

Navodaya Sydney thanked Finn for her presence and support, saying her participation added to the occasion and reflected the spirit of Onam. The organisation also acknowledged other guests, including O'Bray Smith, President of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, **<TURN TO #17>**



❮CONTINUED FROM #16❯ Michael Whaites, General Secretary of the association, actor and producer Shelvin Das, and Mahendran from Sydney Sri Durga Devi Devasthanam.

Organisers said the event was made possible through the efforts of volunteers, performers, judges, MCs, technical teams and photographers who contributed behind the scenes. They also recognised a range of business sponsors and supporting partners who assisted with the celebration.

Navodaya Sydney said it plans to continue organising cultural, educational and community-focused programs throughout the year, including free events designed to strengthen community connections across Sydney.

Onam is widely celebrated by Malayalee communities across Australia and internationally, with festivals often serving as an opportunity for cultural preservation, intergenerational engagement and community participation.

The organisation has invited members of the community to register for future activities and become involved in upcoming programs.





Julia Finn MP (Right) with Beena from Bdesign Sarees during the Navodaya Sydney Onam 2026 celebrations. Finn wore a Kerala saree purchased from Bdesign Sarees for the occasion. Photo/Facebook



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After their father's sudden death, Melbourne brothers Ryan and Dhanush are trying to stay together. Photo supplied

SCAN TO READ POST

GOFUNDME QR CODE

Two brothers, one uncertain future

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

When Melbourne-based medical scientist **Ritika Saxena** talks about her two teenage cousins, one sentence cuts through the months of paperwork, school fees and uncertainty.

"They really only have got each other."

The brothers, **Ryan** and **Dhanush**, now 17 and 13, lost their father suddenly last December. Their mother is alive but has longstanding and serious mental health challenges and is currently being cared for by relatives in India.

The boys have grown up in Australia. Today, they are living at a boarding school, while Ritika and her younger sister have become the closest thing they have to parents here.

But Ritika is not their legal guardian. And although their father left behind superannuation and life insurance, the family has so far been unable to access the money.

Their lives changed on 4 December. Their father, who was in his late 40s, had gone for a jog that morning but returned home feeling unwell. He visited a GP and later collapsed at home. 〈TURN TO #19〉



CONTINUED FROM #18

Ryan, then 16, was there. He performed CPR on his father until paramedics arrived. His father was eventually taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital but could not be saved.

Dhanush was away at school camp. He returned to learn that his father had died while he was away.

Their father had been the family's sole breadwinner and managed almost every aspect of family life. Their mother, whose illness had been managed for many years, required care herself. After her husband's death, she was hospitalised and the family eventually decided, with her treating team, that she would be better supported by relatives in India.

That left the boys in Melbourne and Ritika trying to piece together her late uncle's financial affairs. She went through his papers looking for mortgage, superannuation and insurance details. Eventually, she located the superannuation and, almost by chance, found a piece of paper showing he also had a separate life insurance policy.

What followed has been months of phone calls, paperwork, lawyers and waiting.

Both claims are being processed, but Ritika says accessing the money has been complicated because the boys' mother remains legally responsible for them and is also a beneficiary.



Brothers Ryan, 17, and Dhanush, 13, lost their father and their only source of financial support last December. Photo supplied

For Ritika, the family appears to have fallen into a gap in the system.

"None of the systems and supports are designed for a situation like this where the boys are practically orphans, but legally they have a mother," she says.

Child Protection has been involved twice, Ritika says, but there has been no formal change to the boys' guardianship. A lawyer is helping the family navigate guardianship arrangements and power of attorney.

Government assistance has also proved complicated. With help from a Melbourne City Mission social worker, the family secured Youth Allowance. But Ritika says an application for Family Tax Benefit for Dhanush was unsuccessful because they could not provide court orders or formal guardianship documents.

Boarding school became the most practical way to keep the brothers together, but it comes at a considerable cost.

According to Ritika, their combined school fees are about $85,000 this year. An online fundraiser has raised close to $50,000, while family members have contributed around another $25,000 towards airfares and other expenses.

Now the money is running out. Ritika estimates they need about another $40,000 to cover the remaining school instalments while they wait for the superannuation and insurance claims to be resolved.

This year is particularly important. Ryan is completing Year 12 and will turn 18 next year, while Dhanush is only in Year 7.

Moving the boys to India would be cheaper. The family also considered keeping Ryan in Australia and sending Dhanush to India. But Australia is the only home they have known, and separating them was quickly ruled out.

"The brothers absolutely have to stay together," Ritika says. "They've only got each other."

For now, the family hopes the fundraiser can provide a bridge: enough to get Ryan through Year 12 and Dhanush through Year 7, while keeping the brothers together as the legal, superannuation and insurance processes continue.





Kruthi Bhat performs Carnatic classical music in Canberra, accompanied by mridangam artiste Arjun Ganesh. Photo/Facebook

SCAN TO READ POST

Indian High Commission strikes a Carnatic note in Canberra

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The High Commission of India in Canberra, in association with **Karpahavalli's Canberra Chapter**, hosted a Carnatic classical music concert featuring vocalist Kruthi Bhat, violinist Vittal Rangan and mridangam artiste Arjun Ganesh.

The concert brought together members of the Canberra community for an evening centred on the melodic and rhythmic traditions of South Indian classical music.

Bhat led the performance as vocalist, accompanied by Rangan on violin and Ganesh on the mridangam. Their presentation offered audiences an opportunity to experience the structure, improvisation and expressive qualities associated with Carnatic music.

The event was part of the High Commission's cultural engagement activities, which regularly provide opportunities for audiences in Australia to experience different forms of Indian music, dance and artistic traditions.

The collaboration with Karpahavalli's 〈TURN TO #21〉



The event was part of the High Commission's cultural engagement activities

CONTINUED FROM #20 Canberra Chapter also highlighted the role of community organisations in supporting cultural programmes and creating spaces for Indian classical arts in the Australian capital.

Carnatic music has a long-established tradition built around melody, rhythm and improvisation, with performances often combining composed works with spontaneous musical exchanges between the vocalist and accompanying musicians.

For audiences in Canberra, the concert offered an evening of live classical music while providing a setting for the traditions of Indian music to be shared with the wider community.







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Dr Muneera Bano is a finalist in the Societal Impact in Science category // Photo supplied

SCAN TO READ POST

She came to Australia to do a PhD. Now she's rewriting AI rules

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

When **Dr Muneera Bano** learnt her team had been named among the 50 finalists for the Australian Museum Eureka Prize, the emotion caught her off guard.

"I cannot say how emotional it was," she tells *The Indian Sun*. "It meant a very big achievement. Whether I win or not, even coming to this point is very meaningful."

If she does win, she already knows who the award will be dedicated to. "I would dedicate it to my mum. All my achievements are because of her. She was never given the opportunities I had, so she lived her dreams through me."

It is a dedication that carries the full weight of Dr Bano's remarkable journey. Born in Islamabad to a Pashtun family, she grew up in a culture where women of her mother's generation were not allowed to go to school.

"I am the only woman in my entire extended family with a PhD, and in a male-dominated field," she says. "For men in our culture, education was never an issue. Even my brothers had every opportunity, but none pursued a PhD. For me, it came from within. When you're denied something you're passionate about, you work even harder for it."

Dr Bano leads the AI Diversity and Inclusion team at CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, where her research focuses on identifying and preventing bias in artificial intelligence systems before those **<TURN TO #23>**

> I am the only woman in my entire extended family with a PhD, and in a male-dominated field. For men in our culture, education was never an issue. Even my brothers had every opportunity, but none pursued a PhD
>
> **DR MUNEERA BANO**



Dr Muneera Bano (left) with Professor Didar Zowghi. Bano has been named a finalist in the Societal Impact in Science category at the 2026 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes // Photo Australian Museum

> Wherever there is an AI, there could be potential for harm. And because it's a tool with a lot of power, it can amplify all those biases on scale. By the time you try to rectify things after the fact, the damage has already been done

<CONTINUED FROM #22> systems cause real-world harm. It is work that sits at the intersection of software engineering and social justice—two fields that might seem worlds apart but which she now sees as two sides of the same coin.

The Eureka nomination recognises four years of research that has already begun to shape government policy. The team's guidelines on diversity and inclusion in AI were referenced in Australia's National AI Assurance Framework, and a second version of those guidelines has since been completed, with a public release expected soon.

The work addresses a problem that many people encounter without realising it. When an AI system makes a decision such as on who gets a job interview, who is approved for a credit card, whose face is recognised by law enforcement, it draws on patterns from historical data. If that data reflects past discrimination, the AI repeats and often amplifies it.

"AI learns from the past, what is available to it," Dr Bano explains. "If there is a pattern of discrimination in the data, it can repeat those decisions statistically not because of merit, but because of who you are, which postcode you come from, or which university you went to."

The examples are not hypothetical. Amazon had to take down its AI-based hiring tool after it was found to be systematically discriminating against women for technical roles. Facial recognition systems in the United States have led to wrongful arrests of dark-skinned individuals. And in a recent experiment Dr Bano's team conducted, they asked multiple generative AI systems to draw a software engineer. Every image produced was a young white man in the stereotypical Silicon Valley mould.

"Me and my colleague were thinking—we have PhDs in this domain, and it's not reflecting us at all," she says.

The harms, she notes, are not limited to a single sector. Her team has worked with SEEK on inclusive AI in recruitment, with the Australian Sports Commission on Responsible AI use in Australian community and elite sports, and with Beyond Blue on how AI is increasingly being used in mental health services—sometimes by people who do not fully understand what they are engaging with.

"Wherever there is an AI, there could be potential for harm. And because it's a tool with a lot of power, it can amplify all those biases on scale."

The answer, she argues, is not to slow down AI development but to build inclusion into the design process from the very beginning. "By the time you try to rectify things after the fact, the damage has already been done. You need to consider how to minimise harm before you deploy the system, not after."

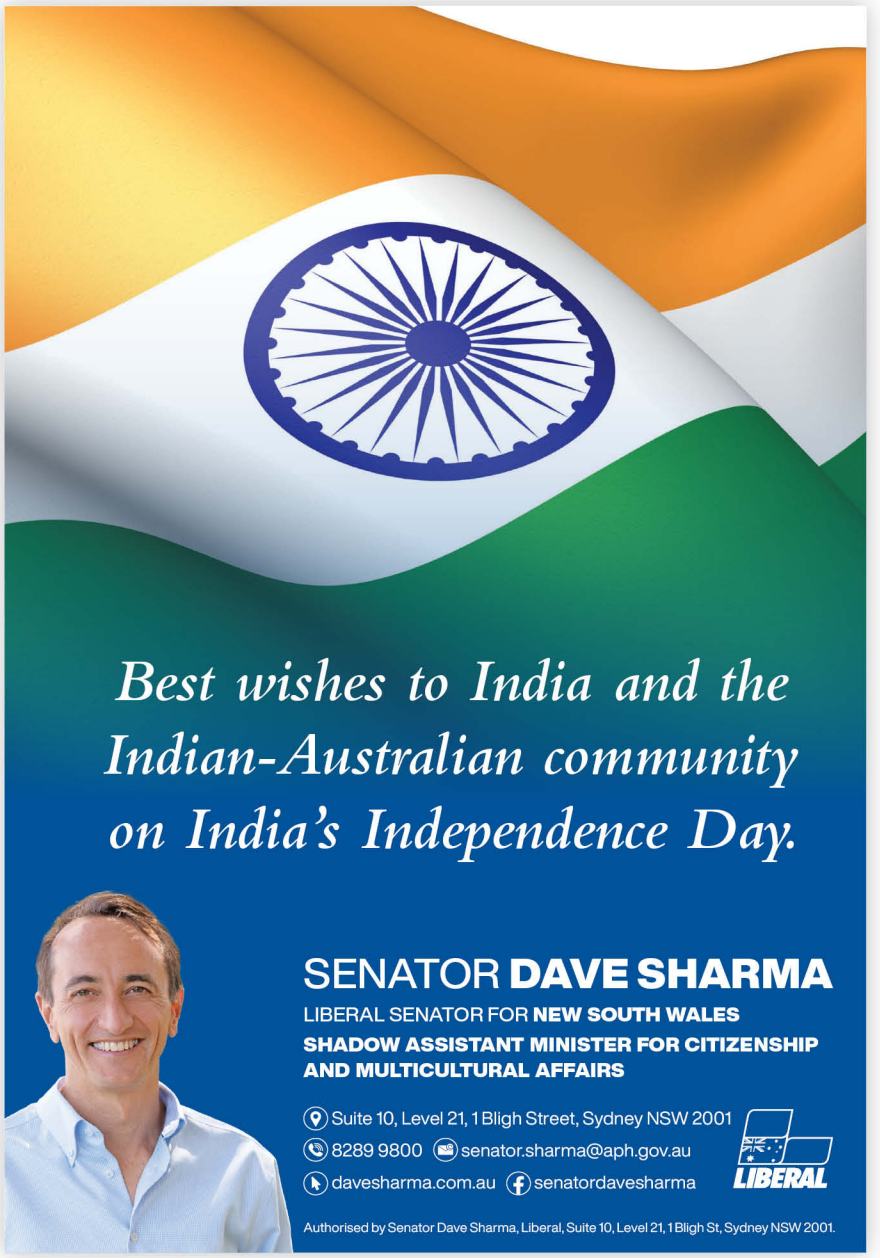
It is a philosophy shaped as much by lived experience as by research. Coming to Australia as an international student, navigating a male-dominated field, building a career far from home and family—Dr Bano has spent much of her life pushing through barriers that others did not have to face.

"Coming from that background, as an international student, I was already an outsider. In any room where people are talking about diversity and inclusion, I see mostly women or people from ethnic backgrounds, those who know what it means."

She came to CSIRO four years ago after positions at Swinburne University and Deakin University, joining a team being formed by her PhD supervisor Professor Didar Zowghi. A year ago, she took over as team lead when Professor Didar stepped down.

Her message to young women and girls from multicultural backgrounds is simple: "Once you set your mind on something, the decision is yours and how hard you are going to work to achieve it. There will always be resistance. If there is no resistance, there is no meaning in it. What's the story anyway, if you didn't overcome something that was trying to stop you?"

The Eureka Prize winners will be announced in September.





Shaji Theckanath has received a Certificate of Appreciation from Queensland Premier David Crisafulli recognising his contribution to Queensland's multicultural community and the wider Malayali community. Photo/Facebook

Shaji Theckanath gets multi-cultural salute in Queensland

SCAN TO READ POST

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Shaji Theckanath has received a Certificate of Appreciation from Queensland Premier David Crisafulli in recognition of his contribution to the state's multicultural community.

The recognition acknowledges the work carried out by Theckanath and his wider team in supporting community connections and contributing to a more inclusive multicultural environment in Queensland.

The certificate was presented as an acknowledgement of the group's efforts and ongoing involvement in community activities. Theckanath said he was pleased to receive the recognition and viewed it as a reflection of the collective work of the wider Malayali ❮TURN TO #25❯







《CONTINUED FROM #24》

community.

In a statement following the recognition, Theckanath expressed his appreciation to the Premier and said the acknowledgement provided encouragement to continue serving the community.

He also credited the wider team and the Malayali community for their contribution, describing the recognition as a shared achievement rather than an individual accomplishment.

Theckanath said the recognition would encourage the team to continue its community work with a focus on service, integrity and clear objectives.

Queensland is home to people from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, with community organisations playing a role in maintaining cultural connections while supporting participation in wider Australian society.

The certificate comes as multicultural organisations and community groups across Queensland continue to contribute through cultural events, community programs and initiatives aimed at bringing people together.

Theckanath said he remained grateful for the recognition and intended to continue working with the community.



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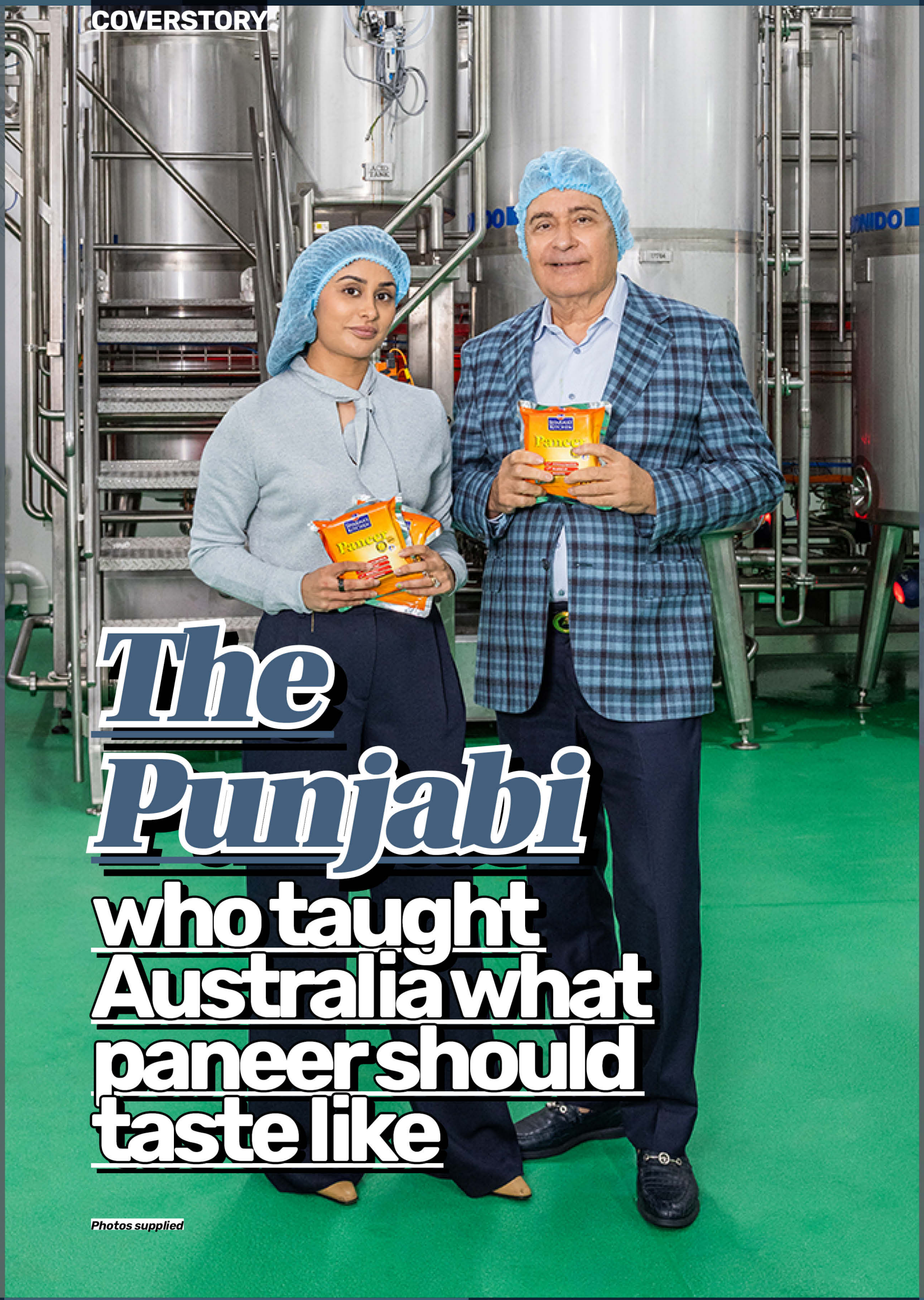
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The Punjabi who taught Australia what paneer should taste like

Photos supplied

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

Bipen Sharma arrived in Australia in his early twenties with nothing. No savings, no connections, no plan beyond a feeling that he needed a change. His first job was on the grill at the Hilton, cooking steaks for a man who had never eaten beef in his life. He was vegetarian. He became, by all accounts, one of the best steak men they had.

That willingness to do what needed doing, and to do it properly, would explanation for everything that followed.

Today, 30 years after Bipen left the restaurant trade to start making yoghurt dips in a Sydney kitchen, **Sharma's Kitchen** is preparing to open a factory in Amritsar, Punjab. The man who arrived with nothing is going home with a business that spans three continents, over 100 staff, four Australian Grand Dairy Award champion titles and a gold medal at the International Cheese and Dairy Awards—the first Indian brand ever to win it.

The factory in Amritsar is about 80 percent built. It will open in 2027, built to Australian standards rather than local minimums, which is, as Bipen puts it, the point. "We are not entering a market. We are going back. And the standard is the thing we are actually selling."

His family is from Punjab. He grew up in Chandigarh, not far from where the new factory is being built. The circle, as his daughter Tanisha observes, is very round.

Bipen came to Melbourne first, working in hospitality before opening three Indian restaurants under the name Sando's. He was, Tanisha says, possibly the first Indian restaurant to receive a chef's hat. The restaurants were popular. Celebrities came. Musicians came. He met a lot of people and learned a lot about what the Australian market would and would not accept.

What it would not accept, he noticed, was the paneer he was serving. People ordered the spinach dishes and left the paneer on the side of the plate. That told him something. "The processes and ingredients they were using to make the paneer were not necessarily correct," Tanisha says. "So he went on this journey to really learn how to make paneer using Australian milk and Australian ingredients, and make sure he could get the correct quality so that people weren't leaving it on the side of the plate."

He moved to Sydney, opened a restaurant Café Bombay on Oxford Street, and began making dips out of necessity. The Indian products he needed for the restaurant simply did not exist in Australia at the standard he wanted. Mint and coriander raita. Cucumber raita. Two flavours. That was the whole company.

The first factory was a small rented space in Gosford, New South Wales. Then came Hornsby, their own facility. "You do not build your own plant unless you have already decided," Bipen says. The decision had been made.

By 1998 the dahi was selling the way milk sells, week after week, the same customers coming back. By 2000 the Hornsby factory was built and the direction was clear. In 2012, Bipen did something that by his own daughter's admission she still cannot entirely explain. He picked up, went to Europe, and built a brand from scratch in Bulgaria, choosing it for one practical reason: easy access to buffalo milk, which meant he could make traditional Indian sweets and a richer style of paneer that Australian dairy could not replicate. That brand, called Dairy Valley, is now the leading Indian dairy brand in Europe and the UK, stocked in Tesco, Sainsbury's and retailers across Germany, France, Poland, the Netherlands, Romania and beyond.

"I didn't know that we would have so much demand," Tanisha says. "But us Indians are everywhere apparently."

Tanisha is 35, Chief Marketing Officer and fastest paneer packer in the company's history, a record she is still quietly proud of and will occasionally test. She joined Sharma's Kitchen straight out of her Bachelor of Commerce, as did her **<TURN TO #29>**



> We are not entering a market. We are going back. And the standard is the thing we are actually selling
>
> **BIPEN SHARMA**



> He'll often have to educate us that it's a good idea, but you're looking at it from an Australian point of view, and that's not going to translate to an Indian market
>
> **TANISHA**



CONTINUED FROM #27 brother Akaash, who now runs the European operation from Bulgaria. The condition her father set for both of them was the same: start at the bottom.

"He was very adamant that in order to earn respect with the staff, you have to really have an understanding of the business," she says. "And the best way to do that is to work from the ground up."

She packed paneer. She did compliance, HR, ordering, production. She learnt everything before she decided what she was best at. That turned out to be marketing, though she could not have known it from a commerce degree alone.

Growing up in the business was, she says, a complicated experience that most Indian family business children will recognise. "You always went as a chore, but you ended up loving seeing your parents and how hard they were working. You loved it, you hated it, but it was always there."

The family dynamic is not what people expect when they hear the words Indian family business. Bipen has raised two strong-willed, openly opinionated children and has always treated them equally. "My dad might say it's not the best thing now because I'm a little too opinionated," Tanisha says, laughing. "But he's always maintained that it's not just his decision, it's our decision as a whole."

Disagreements happen. They are mostly about pace rather than direction. Bipen will sometimes push back on ideas that his Australian-born children have developed with an Australian lens. "He'll often have to educate us that it's a good idea, but you're looking at it from an Australian point of view, and that's not going to translate to an Indian market," Tanisha says. "It's a push and pull between all of us, always."

The awards are the other thing people do not fully expect from an Indian dairy brand. Since 2017, Sharma's Kitchen has won the Australian Grand Dairy Award grand champion title multiple times, competing blind against mainstream Australian dairy producers. The judges are not Indian. They have no particular frame of reference for the products. They just taste them.

"If they love it, then we're doing the right thing," Tanisha says. "Not just on the basis of the Indian community, but with everyone."

The company has deliberately stayed out of major supermarkets, a decision that surprises people given the awards and the scale of the operation. The reason is straightforward. The terms the major supermarkets offer are not fair to the smaller Indian and South Asian stores that have stocked Sharma's Kitchen since the beginning. "We want to make sure that we support the guys that have been there with us from the start," Tanisha says.

In Europe, they are in the major supermarkets. In Australia, they are not. It is a distinction the family is comfortable with.

The Amritsar factory is the piece that matters most right now. It carries a different weight to Bulgaria or the new Australian export hub in Fairfield. This one is personal. Bipen is going back to Punjab, to a place near where he grew up, to build something to a standard that India's dairy industry has not prioritised. He is not going back to compete on price. He is going back to compete on quality, which is the only competition he has ever entered.

There is something quietly remarkable about an Indian-born man who arrived in Australia with nothing, who cooked steaks he had never eaten at a hotel grill, who worked his way into restaurants and then realised the products he needed for those restaurants did not exist, who made them himself in a rented space in Gosford, who built factories on two continents and raised two children who are now running the business he built, and who is now going back to the country where all of it began.

"Slow is not the same as behind," Bipen says. "And you cannot sell quality by saying the word quality. You have to give people something they can check for themselves."

Thirty years on, the paneer stays on the plate.





Femisphere DJ Nightrallies 450 against domestic violence

SCAN TO READ POST

NICK ATTAM
@the_indian_sun

Women from across South-East Queensland came together on 8 August for the **Femisphere DJ Night**, an event combining music, social connection and awareness of domestic and family violence.

Organised by the Tamil Association of Queensland (TAQ), the women-only event attracted more than 450 women, with around 500 people attending overall, including volunteers, organisers, children and family members.

The event carried the message, “Every beat makes a difference, stand against domestic violence”, with organisers using the evening to encourage conversations about domestic and family violence (DFV), coercive control and the early warning signs of abusive behaviour.

Attendees received information about DFV, unhealthy relationships and available support services. The resources highlighted behaviours such as isolation from family and friends, financial control, emotional manipulation, intimidation, excessive monitoring of digital devices and other forms of controlling behaviour.

The information was designed to help women recognise potential warning signs and understand where support may be available.

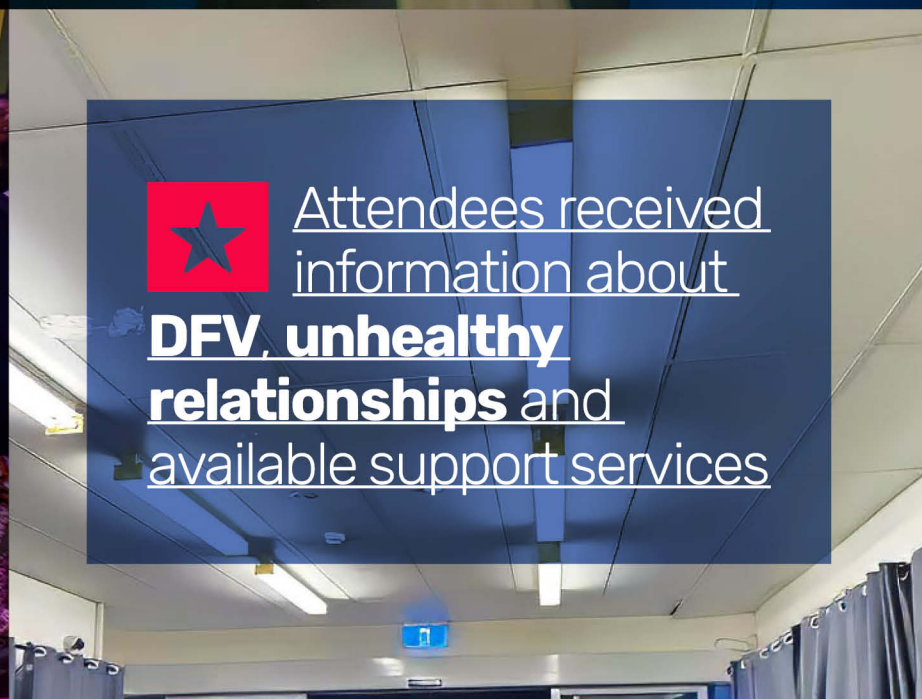
DJ Deepika 〈TURN TO #31〉











Attendees received information about **DFV, unhealthy relationships** and available support services





<CONTINUED FROM #30> from India was among the highlights of the evening, bringing music and interactive engagement to the event. Organisers said the programme was designed to combine entertainment with messages around wellbeing, confidence and personal safety.

Femisphere was established by TAQ in 2024 as a platform focused on creating spaces where women and girls can connect, learn and access information and support.

The initiative was developed under the leadership of TAQ President Karthick Elangovan, alongside Femisphere Convenor Preeta Rajendra Singh, Deputy Convenor Shreemate Narayanan, Uma Rani Agnal Anton and Sangeeta Rajendran.

The organisers said Femisphere was created in response to the need for culturally safe spaces where women could openly discuss issues affecting their lives while building connections and accessing leadership opportunities.

The DJ night received support from Councillor Emily Kim and Julie-Ann Campbell MP, Federal Member for Moreton.

Participant feedback indicated strong interest in seeing the event return. Several attendees called for the DJ night to become an annual programme, while others highlighted the welcoming atmosphere and the opportunity to spend time with other women.

Comments from participants included requests to hold the event at least once every year, along with feedback describing it as energising, empowering and free from judgement.

TAQ said the response would inform plans to expand Femisphere into other areas, including women's leadership, health and wellbeing, economic participation, financial literacy, safety awareness, mentoring and networking.

The association said it intends to build on the programme through further activities supporting women's participation, connection and access to information across Queensland.



Jinson Charls, Northern Territory Minister for Multicultural Affairs, with clergy and parish leaders and community representatives. Photo/Facebook

Jinson Charls ignites Darwin's biggest faith & culture blowout

SCAN TO READ POST

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Northern Territory Minister for Multicultural Affairs Jinson Charls has joined the St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Parish in Darwin for the **St Alphonsa Parish Feast** and **Sunday School Annual Celebrations**, known as **Enkhania 2026**.

Mr Charls attended the event on behalf of Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro and said the occasion was particularly meaningful because it was celebrated within his own parish community.

The annual gathering brought together parishioners of all ages for religious observances, cultural performances and Sunday School celebrations, with families, children and community members taking part throughout the day.



In a message shared after the event, Mr Charls described the celebration as an opportunity for the community to come together through faith, culture and shared traditions.

He congratulated Fr John Puthuva, the parish leadership, Sunday School teachers, volunteers, parents and all those involved in organising the event.

The 〈TURN TO #33〉















Jinson Charls, Northern Territory Minister for Multicultural Affairs, addresses the St Alphonsa Parish Feast and Enkhania 2026 celebrations in Darwin. Photo/Facebook



《CONTINUED FROM #32》 St Alphonsa Parish Feast is one of the key annual events for the Syro-Malabar Catholic community in Darwin and serves as a gathering point for parish families across the region. Enkhania, the parish's Sunday School annual celebration, recognises the participation and achievements of children and young people involved in faith education and community activities.

Community and faith leaders often point to such events as important opportunities to strengthen social connections, support cultural continuity and encourage younger generations to remain engaged with their heritage and community life.

The celebration included participation from parish organisations and volunteers, whose contributions are central to the parish's educational, cultural and charitable activities throughout the year.

St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Parish in Darwin is part of the Eparchy of Melbourne, which serves Syro-Malabar Catholic communities across Australia and New Zealand. The parish has become an important centre for many Indian Catholic families living in the Northern Territory, providing religious services, cultural programs and community support.



Queensland Premier David Crisafulli at India Fest Townsville 2026. Photo/Facebook

SCAN TO READ POST

India Fest Townsville draws 25,000 people to Riverway

NICK ATTAM *TOWNSVILLE*
@the_indian_sun

Riverway came alive on Saturday, 15 August, as more than 25,000 people gathered for **India Fest Townsville 2026**, bringing together communities from across Townsville, North Queensland and beyond for a day of Indian culture, food, music and entertainment.

Held around India's Independence Day, the festival featured traditional and contemporary performances, classical dance, music, regional cultural presentations, workshops, demonstrations, food stalls and family activities.

Visitors could also take part in sari draping, mehndi, cooking and yoga sessions, offering opportunities to engage with Indian traditions.

For Townsville's Indian-Australian community, the festival provided an opportunity to celebrate cultural heritage and share traditions with younger generations. The event also welcomed visitors from across the wider community, providing an introduction to the cultural traditions and regional diversity of India.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli, Townsville Mayor Cr Nick Dametto, members of parliament, councillors, community leaders and representatives from across the region attended the official opening ceremony.

India Fest Townsville Inc. President Binu Jacob said the attendance showed the strength of support for the festival.

"More than 25,000 people came through Riverway, and what makes us particularly proud is that they came from all backgrounds," Mr Jacob said. ❮TURN TO #35❯












> More than 25,000 people came through Riverway, and what makes us particularly proud is that they came from all backgrounds

BINU JACOB

《CONTINUED FROM #34》

"People came together to enjoy the culture, food, performances and atmosphere, and to celebrate what makes our community so diverse."

The festival's programme reflected India's regional diversity through different languages, customs, music, dance and cuisine. Local performers, community groups, businesses, cultural organisations and volunteers also contributed to the event.

Giving back to the local community remained part of the festival, with organisers continuing their Thrift Shop initiative. Proceeds support Fuel for Schools, a local charity assisting school communities and children in need.

The initiative allowed visitors to purchase pre-loved items while contributing to the fundraising effort.

India Fest Townsville Inc. Secretary Nick Attam said the initiative was one way the festival could support the community beyond the event itself.

"For us, community means more than coming together for one day," Mr Attam said.

"It means looking after each other and using the opportunities we have to make a positive difference. Our Thrift Shop is one small way India Fest can turn community participation into meaningful support for local people."

India Fest Townsville is organised by a volunteer-led not-for-profit community organisation. Hundreds of volunteers contribute throughout the year, working across planning, logistics, cultural programming, sponsorship, marketing, stalls, hospitality and event-day operations.

The festival was named Best Event in Queensland at the Queensland Day Awards 2025. Mr Jacob said the recognition belonged to the wider community involved in delivering the event.

"Winning Best Event in Queensland was an incredible honour, but our biggest reward is seeing more than 25,000 people from different backgrounds celebrate together," he said.

The festival also created opportunities for local businesses, food vendors, market stallholders, performers, community organisations and service providers, while bringing visitors to Riverway.

Organisers said their focus now turns to future editions, with plans to continue developing India Fest Townsville as a multicultural event for Townsville and regional Queensland.

The organising committee thanked visitors, volunteers, performers, sponsors, stallholders, community organisations, government representatives, emergency services and media partners for their contribution.

"India Fest belongs to everyone who walks through the gates," Mr Attam said. "Whether you are Indian, Australian, from another cultural background or simply someone who loves a great community celebration, you are part of India Fest."



Roshena Campbell has secured the Victorian Liberal Party's top Legislative Council position for Melbourne's Western Metropolitan Region

SCAN TO READ POST

Campbell wins top Liberal ticket after Deeming fallout

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Melbourne Deputy Lord Mayor **Roshena Campbell** has secured the Victorian Liberal Party's top Legislative Council position for Melbourne's Western Metropolitan Region, defeating sitting upper house MP Trung Luu in a state executive vote that reshapes the Coalition's election strategy in one of its safest upper house regions.

Campbell won Thursday night's ballot 12 votes to seven, replacing disendorsed MP Moira Deeming as the Liberal Party's lead candidate for November's state election. The top position is widely regarded as all but guaranteeing election under Victoria's proportional upper house voting system.

Luu, who has already nominated for the second position on the ticket, now faces a more uncertain path back to Parliament as the Liberals confront a more competitive electoral environment, with analysts and party figures warning One Nation could challenge for an upper house seat in Melbourne's outer west.

Campbell's selection follows weeks of turmoil within the Victorian Liberal Party after Deeming was stripped of her endorsement over allegations she made against former Opposition Leader Matthew Guy. Police reviewed CCTV footage and found no evidence to support the complaint, and the party's state executive later voted unanimously to remove her as its candidate. Deeming subsequently resigned from the Liberal Party and now sits as an independent.

A barrister and Melbourne Deputy Lord Mayor since 2024, Campbell previously contested the federal seat of Aston at the 2023 by-election and has built a public profile through local government, including serving as acting Lord Mayor during Lord Mayor Nick Reece's absences. If elected in November, her departure would trigger a by-election for Melbourne's Deputy Lord Mayor because more than six months remain in the council term.

Her appointment has already prompted criticism from some Liberal figures and local observers because she lives in Brunswick, outside the Western Metropolitan Region she is seeking to represent. The electorate covers Melbourne's western suburbs, including Footscray, Williamstown, Point Cook, Tarneit, Werribee, Caroline Springs, St Albans and Sunbury.

Supporters, however, argue upper house members represent broad regions rather than individual electorates and point to Campbell's legal background, media profile and campaign experience as assets heading into the November poll.

The decision also ends speculation over who would replace Deeming after the Liberal state executive reopened nominations last month. Businessman and community leader Dinesh Gourisetty, who won the party's original March preselection before later withdrawing, had been regarded as a potential contender, while western suburbs advocate Jenny Matic and former Liberal candidates Tim Beddoe and Steve Murphy were also discussed as possible nominees.

Campbell's elevation signals the party has opted for a high-profile candidate from outside Melbourne's west rather than promoting sitting MP Trung Luu to the lead position, as some Liberal MPs had advocated.

Ballarat Malayalee community marks Onam with cultural celebration

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

More than 100 Malayalee families and university students gathered in Ballarat to celebrate Onam, bringing together members of the local community for a day of cultural performances, traditional food and family activities.

Victorian MP Juliana Addison joined the celebrations hosted by the **Ballarat Malayalee Association Inc (BMA)**, describing the event as an opportunity to celebrate Kerala's harvest festival and share its traditions with the wider Ballarat community.



Juliana Addison joined Ballarat Malayalee Association's Onam 2026 celebration, bringing local families and students together to celebrate Kerala's harvest festival in Ballarat. Photo/Facebook

> Community organisations such as the Ballarat Malayalee Association have emerged alongside a sizeable Indian population in the regional city. The 2021 Census recorded 466 people spoke Malayalam at home

Onam is one of Kerala's most important festivals and is traditionally associated with gratitude, family, friendship and prosperity. The Ballarat event featured cultural performances, children's activities and the Onam Sadhya, a traditional feast served on banana leaves.

Addison said it was encouraging to see local families and students come together to celebrate their heritage while welcoming others into the festivities.

Community organisations such as the Ballarat Malayalee Association have emerged alongside a sizeable Indian population in the regional city. The 2021 Census recorded 1,846 India-born residents in the City of Ballarat, while 466 people spoke Malayalam at home, making it the third most commonly spoken language other than English after Mandarin and Punjabi.

Local community members say the Malayalee population has continued to grow since the 2021 Census, with more families settling in Ballarat and the city emerging as a regional hub for the community. The 2026 Census should provide a clearer picture of how much that population has grown over the past five years.

The celebration demonstrated the growing presence of Kerala's Malayalee community in regional Victoria, where cultural festivals have become a way to maintain traditions across generations while building connections with the broader community.

Organisers said the event provided a space for families, students and local residents to participate in one of Kerala's most cherished cultural celebrations.



Aunty Jenny Spices co-founders Ramneek Wayne and Evangeline Wayne, whose business has grown from a family kitchen idea to products stocked in more than 200 stores across Australia. Photo supplied

SCAN TO READ POST

Wealth creation tops migrant priorities, NAB research shows

OUR REPORTER
𝕏 @the_indian_sun

More than four in five recent **migrants to Australia regard saving for the future as a key financial goal**, with property ownership and wealth creation also among their priorities, according to research commissioned by NAB.

The research, conducted for the bank by RFI Global, found 84 per cent of recent migrants identified saving for the future as an important goal as they established themselves in Australia.

NAB did not provide details of the survey sample size or methodology in material accompanying the findings.

The research comes as Australia's Indian-born population continues to grow rapidly. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show 971,020 people born in India were living in Australia at 30 June 2025, making India the largest overseas country of birth for the first time on record, narrowly ahead of England. The Indian-born population has increased by more than 522,000 since 2015.

NAB executive for Personal Everyday Banking Sweta Mehra said the financial decisions migrants made after arriving in Australia often reflected longer-term ambitions around education, employment, housing and business ownership.

"Every new arrival brings their own story of ambition—whether that is pursuing an education, building a career, supporting family, buying a home or starting a business," Ms Mehra said.

"At NAB, we're committed to helping customers through the important milestones that come with building a life in Australia."

One of those business owners is Ramneek Wayne, co-founder of Aunty Jenny Spices, which began with an effort to prepare Indian food using preservative-free spices for his in-laws and has since developed into a national retail business.

Wayne said building the company had reflected many of the pressures and aspirations that came with starting again in a new country.

"Like many migrants, we came to Australia in pursuit of an opportunity and to build a better future rather than wait for one. Building a business from the ground up has been hard work, and that's exactly what has made it worth it," he said.

The company sources spices directly from farms and uses recipes drawn from the family's Indian background. Its products are now stocked in more than 200 stores across Australia, with the business planning to expand to about 800 stores by the end of the year.

"Aunty Jenny Spices came out of our culture, our family and the flavours we grew up with. What started as a small idea is now a business we're proud of, connecting with customers right across Australia. Our heritage is the root of what we do, not the ceiling," Wayne said.

He said the experience of establishing the business had required persistence rather than relying on circumstances to fall into place.

"Migration isn't about luck. It's about knowing what you're willing to work for, backing yourself, and striving to build something that lasts."

Brisbane student's double honour: leadership and Bansuri



Poonita Agarwal receives an award recognising her leadership and achievements in promoting the traditional Indian Bansuri. Photo supplied

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Brisbane State High School student **Poonita Agarwal** has been recognised for her leadership and dedication to preserving and promoting the traditional Indian bamboo flute, the Bansuri.

The Year 10 student achieved Grade 6 Bansuri Certification through PRSSV Global Performing Arts Qualifications in the United Kingdom in 2025, at the age of 14. According to the information provided by her supporters, she is believed to be the youngest known Australian to reach that level of certification.

Poonita has performed at a range of civic and multicultural events across Queensland, including appearances at Queensland Parliament, Government House Queensland, the Consulate General of India, and community celebrations across Brisbane.

Her musical work has focused on sharing a traditional Indian classical instrument with wider audiences, and her performances have been presented as part of multicultural and community events that bring together people from different backgrounds.

Alongside her achievements in music, Poonita has received an Academic Excellence Award and previously served as Junior School Captain. Those roles have highlighted her involvement in both academic and leadership activities within her school community.

Supporters say her commitment to music and community participation has helped encourage cultural understanding and inclusion while providing a positive example for other young people interested in the arts.

Bansuri has a long history in Indian classical music and is widely recognised for its role in both classical and devotional traditions. Young musicians pursuing advanced certification in the instrument often undertake years of structured training and performance assessment.

Poonita's combination of musical achievement, academic recognition and community engagement has drawn attention within Brisbane's multicultural community, where she continues to perform and participate in cultural events.

> Poonita has performed at a range of civic and multicultural events across Queensland, including appearances at Queensland Parliament



SIYER brings Indian chants into a contemporary musical space. Photos supplied

Melbourne artist SIYER releases 'Flow of Nectar'

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Melbourne-based Indian-Australian artist **SIYER**, also known as **Shriram Iyer**, has released his new album *Flow of Nectar*, a collection of chants that combines traditional Indian spiritual sounds with contemporary ambient and world-music production.

Released in August, the album explores familiar sacred sounds through a modern musical approach, while retaining their devotional character. SIYER describes the project as "peaceful, yet powerful", with the music intended to offer listeners an opportunity to slow down and listen without requiring prior knowledge of the chants.

For SIYER, the project has a personal connection to the sounds he encountered growing up.

"For so many of us, these chants are part of our cultural memory," he said. "You may remember hearing them from your parents or grandparents without even knowing what they meant. Years later, you realise those sounds have stayed somewhere inside you."

The Melbourne artist said *Flow of Nectar* was shaped by the experience of growing up with Indian musical traditions while living in a multicultural environment.

The album does not attempt to reproduce the chants solely within their traditional musical setting. Instead, SIYER has placed them alongside atmospheric production and contemporary arrangements, creating a listening experience aimed at audiences familiar with Indian music as well as those encountering the sounds for the first time.

"It is unmistakably Indian in its roots," SIYER said. "But you don't have to be Indian to connect with it. You don't have to understand every word. The emotion comes first."

The idea of creating a calmer listening experience was another motivation behind the project. SIYER said the pace and constant stimulation of modern life influenced his decision to make music that could be listened to without demanding the listener's full attention.

"I wanted to create something that asks absolutely nothing of you," he said. "You can sit with it, drive with it, meditate with it or simply close your eyes and listen."

At the same time, SIYER said the album was not intended to strip the chants of their strength in favour of a purely ambient sound.

"There is tremendous strength in these chants," he said. "I wanted to preserve that power while creating a sense of peace around it."

Executive Producer Monil Patel of Team Reliable Entertainment supported the project with the aim of helping introduce the album to a wider international audience.

"*Flow of Nectar* brings together Indian tradition and a contemporary global sound in a way that feels both authentic and accessible," Patel said.

Music Producer Vatsal Chevli also worked on the album, with SIYER crediting both Chevli and Patel for their contributions to the project.

The release follows an established performing career for SIYER, who has appeared in more than 700 live concerts and worked with Indian artists including Shankar Mahadevan, Udit Narayan and Sadhana Sargam.

He has also featured on Charu Suri's Shayan, described in the release as a GRAMMY-nominated album, and his previous album, *Rain of Bhakti: Timeless Mantras*, received the Best Global Traditional Album award at the World Entertainment Awards in Los Angeles.

With *Flow of Nectar*, SIYER has taken a more intimate direction, using familiar Indian chants as the foundation for a contemporary recording aimed at listeners across different backgrounds.

"There is something beautiful about taking a sound your grandmother might recognise and presenting it in a way that someone in Melbourne, Mumbai, London or Los Angeles can put on their headphones and connect with," he said.

Flow of Nectar is now available on Spotify and YouTube Music.

$25.6m boost for eight Indian languages in schools

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OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

The federal government will fund expanded teaching of Indian languages through to Years 11 and 12, with grants supporting new resources, teacher training and senior secondary classes across several states.

The funding will cover Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu under the Fluency in Asian Languages stream of the Community Language Schools Grants Program.

Projects receiving support include Tamil programs in New South Wales, digital resources for Hindi and other languages through the Australian National University, teacher development in Victoria and assistance for community language schools seeking to establish classes from Years 7 to 12.

Tamil Study Centre Homebush Inc will pilot a Tamil fluency program in Homebush before expanding it across NSW, with online resources to be made available nationally.

The NSW Federation of Tamil Schools Inc will receive support to strengthen Tamil teaching for secondary students, including new learning resources and opportunities for students to use the language outside the classroom.

The Australian National University will develop Digital Language Hubs offering teaching materials and professional development for community language teachers, including those teaching Hindi.

Community Languages Victoria Inc will establish an online Teachers Hub and work on extending Asian language learning from the middle years into senior secondary education.



Multicultural Affairs Minister Anne Aly during a June visit to the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir community in Wangara. The federal government is now funding expanded Indian language education, including Hindi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Bengali and Urdu, with a focus on helping students continue their studies through to Years 11 and 12. Photo: Anne Aly/Facebook

The University of Sydney will also work with community language schools to establish Years 7 to 12 classes, train additional teachers and develop resources that can be used nationally.

Multicultural Affairs Minister Anne Aly said maintaining language skills could have educational, cultural and economic benefits for young Australians.

"Language connects young people to their family, culture and community, and it also opens doors to study, employment and opportunity," Dr Aly said.

"These grants will help more students continue learning Indian languages into their senior secondary years, supported by skilled teachers and high-quality resources."

She said Australia's multilingual population also had value beyond individual communities.

"Australia's linguistic diversity is one of our greatest strengths. It helps us understand one another at home and strengthens our relationships across the region and the world."

The latest grants sit within a $25.6 million federal investment over four years from 2025-26 in community language schools, which the government says support more than 90,000 students studying more than 80 languages.

They follow a separate funding round in which 85 community language schools were allocated more than $1.47 million over four years to expand programs, train teachers and develop learning materials.

Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs Julian Hill said community language schools remained important for families seeking to pass languages between generations.

"Community language schools play a vital role in helping young Australians stay connected to their heritage, strengthen intergenerational ties, and celebrate cultural identity," Mr Hill said.

"This funding recognises the important role teachers and schools play in keeping languages, cultures and connections strong for future generations."

Mr Hill also linked language education with Australia's economic and regional relationships.

"Having more Australians capable of speaking the languages of our largest trading partners and neighbours is a huge benefit to our nation, opening further employment opportunities and career paths for students, and growing economic ties with our friends and neighbours across our region."

The funding places greater emphasis on keeping community language study going beyond the primary and early secondary years, where many programs have traditionally been concentrated, and into the senior years of schooling.

The IB at Werribee



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Choosing a senior secondary pathway is one of the most significant decisions a student will make. For those seeking an academically challenging and internationally recognised qualification, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme at **Werribee Secondary College** is an outstanding option.

The IB Diploma, an alternative to the VCE, is renowned for developing critical thinking, research, communication and problem-solving skills that prepare students for success beyond school. Rather than focusing solely on examinations, the program encourages students to think independently, make connections across subjects and engage with issues from a global perspective.

Students study a broad range of subjects while also completing the Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge and Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), experiences that foster resilience, curiosity and a commitment to community involvement. These qualities make IB graduates well prepared for university and future careers.

Werribee Secondary College is proud to offer this world-class program within Melbourne's west, giving local students access to a rigorous academic pathway in a supportive public school environment. The college's experienced staff and strong culture of learning ensure students are challenged while being well supported throughout their senior years.

As universities and employers increasingly value adaptable, independent learners, the benefits of an IB education continue to grow. For students with ambition, curiosity and a willingness to embrace challenge, the IB Diploma Programme is a pathway well worth considering.

Limited places are available for year 11 in 2027.

Express your interest now.
werribeesc.vic.edu.au/ib

"I chose the IBDP because it gives me an opportunity to study abroad in the future, and gain new memories, experiences and achievements along the way. The thing I love most about the IB is that we get exposure to experiences beyond the classroom, like research projects, volunteering, and opportunities for deep critical thinking."
— Aarna (IBDP Student)

"The International Baccalaureate (IB) develops lifelong learners who thrive and make a difference"



Think Globally, Live Worthily.

Nepal is thousands of kms away. In Officer, the grief is close

SCAN TO READ POST

INDIRA LAISRAM
@indira_laisram

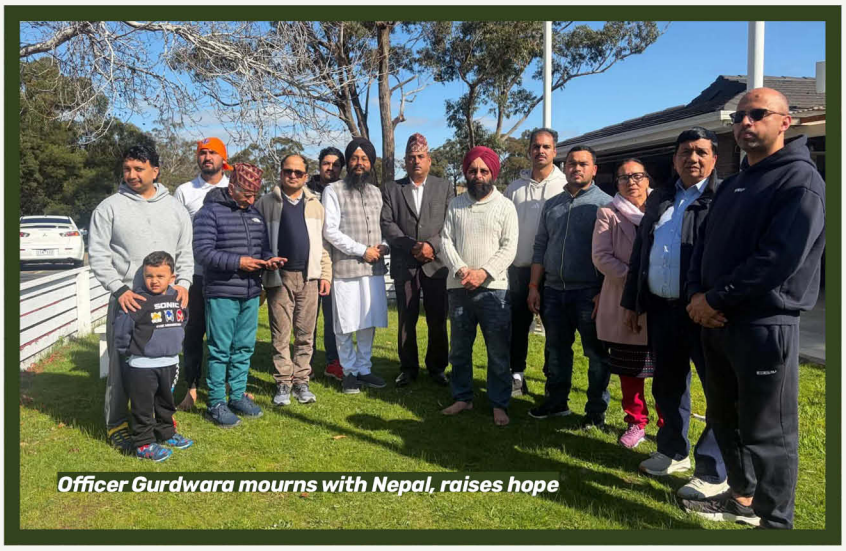
Arjun Chalise is one of thousands of Nepali-Australians watching helplessly as their homeland reels from devastating floods that have claimed hundreds of lives.

When Arjun scrolls through his phone these days, he sees videos he can barely process. “What you see on movies and AI videos is not something you see happening in real life,” he says. “It’s very, very hard to just understand that this is real.”

For Chalise and Melbourne’s Nepali community, the disaster unfolding in Nepal is deeply personal. Entire villages along the Trishuli River have been swept away by flash floods triggered by a glacier collapse near the Nepal-China border. At least 360 people have died, and hundreds more, including dozens of Australians, remain missing. Behind every number is a person—a mother, a father, a son, a daughter, a relative, a friend, and someone deeply loved.

Chalise’s own family was fortunate. They live in the west of Nepal, while the worst of the flooding hit the north. “My family was just lucky that they weren’t involved in this. But others in his community have not been so lucky. There are a few families in that community that have been affected. They’ve had loved ones missing from this.”

Being so far from home makes it harder. “They can only do so much being so far away,” Chalise says. “That’s why we’re trying to set up all these prayers and rituals to make everyone feel like they’re at home and feel like they have some sort of support.” He is part of a growing Nepali community in Pakenham, where about 30 to 50 families are coming together to support one another. “We are trying to slowly keep making progress and have an actual community,” he says.



Officer Gurdwara mourns with Nepal, raises hope



Photo courtesy of @debanishachom on X

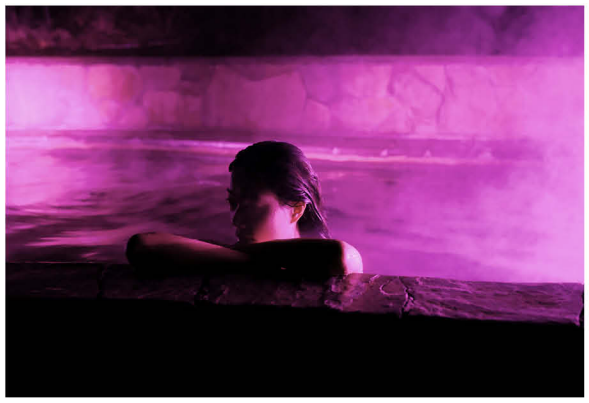
On Sunday, around 20 members of the local Nepali community gathered at the Officer Gurdwara ‘Siri Guru Nanak Darbar’ for a special prayer service organised by Harpreet Singh Kandra, a community volunteer and academic at Federation University. Together, they prayed for the precious lives lost, for strength and comfort for all the families affected, and for the safe return of those still missing. They also prayed that relief and rescue agencies receive the support, resources and guidance they need to continue their important work. “It was a lovely gesture,” Chalise says of the service.

Like many in the community, Chalise believes the most effective way to help is through official channels. “The only thing we can do from here is just donate to the government to rebuild Nepal,” he says. “We’ve just been directing anyone that wants to help us directly to the government’s donation front page, rather than collecting money and donating.” He adds: “I think it’s the safer way to do it, which all us Nepalese have agreed on as well. We should just let the government deal with what they want to do, rather than us trying to get the money from people.”

The Officer Gurdwara has also started a fundraiser to support the Nepalese Prime Minister’s Relief Fund. Anyone wishing to contribute can contact them via email at info@sgnd.com.au. All donations received this week will go towards relief in Nepal.

Back in Nepal, the rescue effort is painstaking. “It’s just all mud and slurry, it’s very hard to do anything there besides just dig through and find people that are missing,” Chalise jun says. He believes the most important thing right now is for everyone to come together. “All the residents and civilians should come together and try to help the rescue team, and make this a much smoother recovery.”

For the Nepali community in Melbourne, the grieving and praying continues.



HEAT, SOUND & SEVEN Chakras

At **Peninsula Hot Springs**, coloured pools and underwater soundscapes fuse with chakra-inspired frequencies for a transformative after-dark bathing ritual





SCAN TO READ POST



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

There is a point after sunset when **Peninsula Hot Springs** becomes a very different place.

The crowds soften into silhouettes, steam rises against the evening air and a series of pools in the Amphitheatre begin to glow in deep reds, oranges, blues and violets. Then, on lowering the ears beneath the surface, another element appears: music, not heard from speakers around the pool, but travelling through the water itself.

It is this combination of heat, colour and submerged sound that gives Seek the Heat, Peninsula Hot Springs' winter wellness experience, its most memorable quality.

Running until 4 October, the experience centres on seven illuminated pools, each linked to one of the seven chakras and accompanied by an original soundscape and frequency. The concept draws directly on a system with roots in Indian philosophy, placing a tradition familiar to many Indian visitors within a distinctly Australian thermal-bathing setting.

That could easily have become little more than colourful wellness branding. Peninsula Hot Springs says it was conscious of that risk.

The organisation says its approach began with "respect, curiosity and a commitment to understanding its cultural origins rather than simply adopting its symbolism". Its relationship with Indian traditions predates Seek the Heat, through annual Diwali celebrations, yoga, Ayurvedic-inspired treatments and its Arts, Culture & Events program, which has involved Indian performers, artists, community members and businesses.

The idea itself grew from conversations between Peninsula Hot Springs ACE director Marty Williams and Mornington Peninsula ambient composer Josh Roydhouse, an artist in residence at the springs. Roydhouse had been examining links between sound, frequency and the seven chakras, eventually developing the music that accompanies the pools.

Before the experience opened to the public, members of the Peninsula Hot Springs team also took part in a chakra embodiment session led by yoga teacher and staff member Marina McLean, intended to give those delivering the program a better understanding of the tradition behind it.

The result works best when it is approached less as a lesson in chakras and more as an experience in how surroundings alter perception.

Each of Roydhouse's seven original compositions has been created for a particular illuminated pool. Underwater speakers carry the sound through the water, changing the way the music is experienced physically. Rather than sitting outside the listener, it seems to surround the body. **〈TURN TO #47〉**

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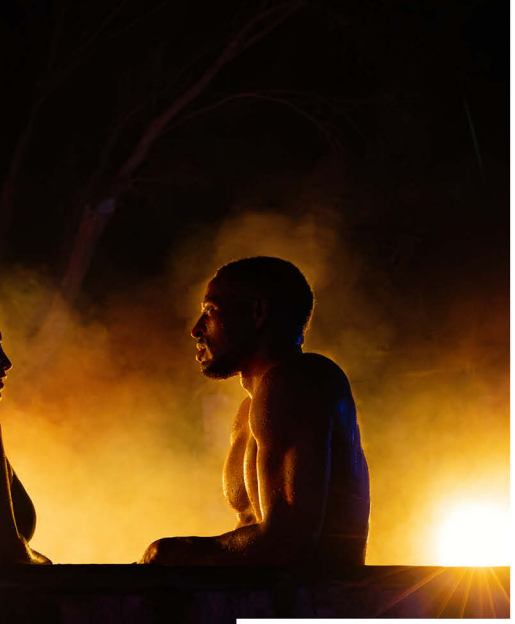




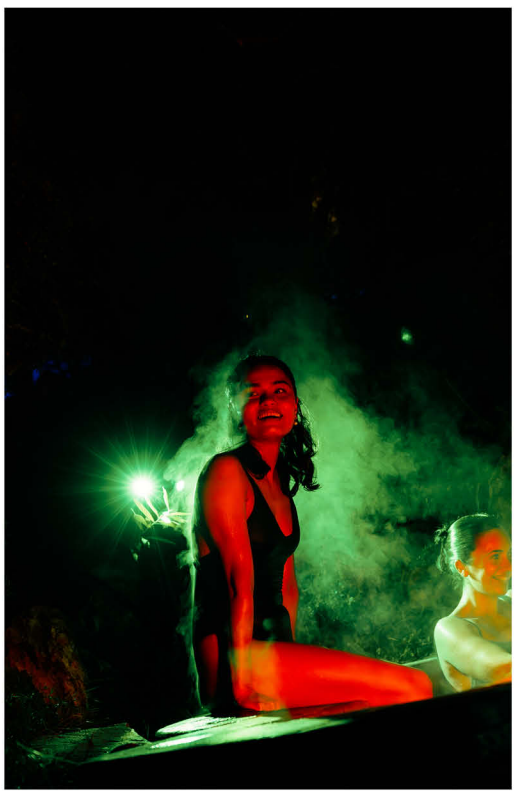
Thermal bathing after dark has an atmosphere that daytime visits cannot quite reproduce. The contrast between cool evening air and hot mineral water becomes sharper













Peninsula Hot Springs says multicultural influences have been part of the property from its early years, pointing to bathing traditions that exist across many cultures

CONTINUED FROM #45

It is easily the strongest element of the evening.

Submerge the ears and the noises of the surrounding bathers recede. The soundtrack becomes clearer and more enveloping. Raise the head again and the ordinary sounds of an outdoor bathing complex return. That simple movement between the two is strangely compelling.

There is no requirement to move methodically from chakra one through seven. Visitors can follow the sequence or linger in whichever pool, colour or soundtrack they find most appealing. Peninsula Hot Springs describes the intention as giving guests space to notice whether changing colour, frequency and sound alter how they feel.

The setting helps. Thermal bathing after dark has an atmosphere that daytime visits cannot quite reproduce. The contrast between cool evening air and hot mineral water becomes sharper, while the lighting is far more effective once the surrounding sky has darkened.

For that reason, arriving before sunset makes sense. There is time to explore the rest of the property while it is still light, have dinner or move between the conventional pools, and then return to the Amphitheatre as the colours become more pronounced. Peninsula Hot Springs itself recommends this approach for visitors wanting the full Seek the Heatexperience.

First-time visitors also have a choice between two quite different ways of experiencing the property.

The Bath House is the larger, more social option and is open to all ages, with more than 50 bathing and wellness experiences. It suits families, groups and visitors who want to wander and try a variety of pools and facilities.

The Spa Dreaming Centre, by comparison, is restricted to guests aged 16 and over and offers another 20 bathing and wellness experiences in a quieter setting. It is the better fit for those seeking a more secluded evening rather than the bustle of the main bathing area. Seek the Heat is included with entry to either.

There is also something interesting in seeing an Australian wellness destination engage so directly with an Indian concept.

Peninsula Hot Springs says multicultural influences have been part of the property from its early years, pointing to bathing traditions that exist across many cultures. Its facilities include ideas drawn from Turkish and Moroccan hammams and Nepalese-inspired mineral showers, while its events program brings music, movement and wellbeing practices from different communities into the venue.

Its stated aim is to develop those experiences through relationships with practitioners and communities rather than simply lifting elements from different cultures.

"We want Peninsula Hot Springs to be a place where different traditions can be shared and celebrated in a way that creates connection, curiosity and a deeper understanding of the cultures and practices that inspire them," the organisation says.

Seek the Heat does not attempt to explain the chakra system in any scholarly sense, nor does a night in seven coloured pools promise spiritual transformation. Its strength is much simpler.

It takes an already appealing evening at the hot springs and gives it another layer. The lights draw visitors towards the Amphitheatre, but it is the underwater sound that stays in the memory.

For visitors accustomed to thinking of Peninsula Hot Springs primarily as a daytime outing, that alone makes the after-dark experience worth considering.

The Valley Changed Forever

Ten minutes after a pilgrimage group reported reaching the Nepal-Tibet border, a wall of water, ice and debris tore through the valley. Among those caught in the disaster were dozens of Australians whose families are still waiting for answers



OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

At 9.05 on the morning of August 26, a message arrived from one of the most isolated border crossings in the world.

A group of pilgrims returning from Mount Kailash had reached the immigration post at Gyirong, between Tibet and Nepal. Their leader confirmed their arrival before the travellers prepared to complete the crossing.

Ten minutes later, a mass of water, ice, rocks and mud swept through the valley.

The immigration complex was washed away. Roads and bridges disappeared. Buildings were ripped from their foundations as the flood travelled into Nepal through the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river systems.

Among the group were 11 Australians. Days later, their families still did not know whether they had crossed into Nepal, remained in Tibet or found a way to reach higher ground.

They were part of a much larger Australian toll. By noon on August 31, the number of Australians unaccounted for had risen to 43. Six were believed to be on the Tibetan side of the border, according to information supplied to the Australian government by the Chinese Embassy.

The figure had climbed steadily as families reported relatives missing and consular officials worked to establish who had been travelling through the region. It began at 34, rose to 39, then 42. By Monday morning, Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister Matt Thistlethwaite confirmed there were 43.

Each revision carried new anguish for another family.

Many of the missing Australians had travelled to the Himalayas for the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage, a journey of profound religious meaning for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and followers of the Bon tradition. Mount Kailash, rising from the Tibetan plateau, is revered as a sacred place rather than a summit to be conquered.

The pilgrims had completed a demanding journey through high altitude and difficult terrain. They were on their way home when the flood struck.

Brisbane father and Royal Australian Air Force member Karan Bhardwaj, 40, was travelling with friends Arpan Mithalal Kothari and Bhavinkumar Raval as part of a Kailash Journeys group.

All three disappeared near the Nepal-Tibet border.

"Karan is an Australian, a proud member of the Australian Defence Force and a beloved father of one, brother, uncle, brother-in-law and friend to many," his family told Channel 7.

His sister-in-law Jen Nai has circulated his photograph widely, hoping someone in Nepal, Tibet or among the rescued travellers might recognise him. The image shows Bhardwaj in his RAAF uniform, looking directly into the camera.

For his family, military service is part of who he is, but it offers no protection from the uncertainty confronting every family of a missing traveller. At home in Australia, they are waiting for a telephone call that has not come.

"We're desperately waiting for news and praying with everything we have that Karan is safe and will come home to us all," Nai told the ABC.

The missing include parents, children, professionals and community workers from across Australia.

Sydney couple Shylaja and Chandrasekaran Muralitharan were travelling with their sons Ashwin, 14, and Aarush, 11. The family was part of a Himalayan Glacier Adventures group that lost contact near the border.

Relatives said they last spoke with the family on the morning of the disaster. They were preparing for breakfast and waiting to proceed through immigration.

Sreedharan and Lakshmi Iyer, also from Sydney, were travelling with their sons Rishabh and Rudhra. Friends said both young men were studying medicine. Venkatraman Balakrishnan and his wife Chitra Venkatraman were part of the same pilgrimage group.

The last ordinary conversations between these families now carry an unbearable weight. A brief call before breakfast, a message confirming arrival or a note saying the group was nearing the border has become the final known point in a journey interrupted without warning.

Reshma Patel, a mother from Newcastle, was among the 11 Australians travelling with an Isha Foundation group. Her husband, Bhavin Patel, flew to Nepal to search for her.

He believes she may have survived.

Phone data examined by the family appeared to show her device connecting to a signal in Tibet after the flood. Patel offered the information to authorities, hoping it could help narrow the search.

"I just want some help to bring Reshma back home," he told the ABC.

The information has also exposed one of the central problems facing the families. This is not a search taking place within one country under one command. The disaster zone crosses an international border in a remote and tightly controlled region.

Chinese state media reported that six Australians were among more than 260 foreign nationals unaccounted for on the Tibetan side. Yet it remained unclear how many members of the Isha Foundation group had formally passed through immigration before the flood arrived.

Patel said his family was ready to provide the phone data, but needed greater cooperation between Australian, Nepali and Chinese authorities.

"The Chinese government has got their own technology, so we try to get something from there, but we're not able to get anything from there," he said.

Rescuers reached the destroyed border site days after the flood, crossing mountains and descending steep slopes with **<TURN TO #49>**



> Their hope rests on the possibility that the mountains which isolated their loved ones may also have sheltered them

Floodwaters pound and collapse a bridge in Malekhu before sweeping it away. (Photo: X/@WeatherMonitors/AI-enhanced)

<CONTINUED FROM #48> ropes. One Chinese rescuer described seeing nothing but ruins.

The terrain was difficult before the disaster. It is now fractured by collapsed roads, broken bridges and unstable slopes. Heavy machinery cannot easily reach many locations. Helicopters remain one of the few ways to move survivors, rescue teams and supplies between isolated communities.

At an army camp in Bidur, south of some of the worst destruction, helicopters arrived carrying people from settlements upstream. Relatives of missing travellers waited nearby, watching each aircraft land and hoping that someone they knew would step out.

For days, the search moved between hope and grief.

There were reports of people found in forests after climbing away from the river. Others were rescued from buildings, tunnels and pockets of higher ground. Nepal Police and Army personnel carried injured and exhausted survivors through deep mud where roads once stood.

One of those stories reached Australia with the safe recovery of Cara Severino.

The 26-year-old NSW hiker had been completing the Langtang trek when the disaster cut communications and left her stranded at Kyanjin Gompa. She joined a group of Nepali hikers and made her way out of the isolated area, eventually contacting her family.

Australian consular officials travelled from Kathmandu by four-wheel-drive to an accessible checkpoint on her route and safely located her on August 29.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong spoke with Severino and described her recovery as a rare piece of positive news amid immense loss and uncertainty.

Severino later thanked Sudha, Lucas, Samir and Saugat, the group she had met while entering the national park.

"Thanks to them I got out safely," she said.

Her relief was tempered by what she had witnessed. She described passing a man who had lost his entire family when his town was destroyed.

"I feel for the families of those still missing," she said. "I know how much my family and friends went through."

For families waiting in Australia, Severino's survival offered a reason to resist the growing fear that time was running out. Communications remained down in some areas, and authorities continued to find people who had escaped into the mountains but were unable to contact anyone.

No Australian deaths had been publicly confirmed by noon on August 31. The government continued to describe the 43 as missing or unaccounted for.

The wider toll, however, was becoming harder to comprehend.

More than 800 people had been confirmed dead across Nepal and Tibet, with more than 3,000 missing. The numbers shifted as authorities reached new areas and reconciled lists of residents, workers and foreign visitors.

The International Red Cross estimated that at least 93,000 people had been affected. UNICEF said more than 17,000 children urgently required assistance, with schools, health facilities, water systems and telecommunications damaged or destroyed.

At Tribhuvan Trishuli Secondary School in Nuwakot, headteacher Rajendra Dawadi was credited with helping about 900 students escape after receiving warnings that floodwater was approaching. Children ran towards higher ground shortly before the torrent reached the area.

Other communities received only seconds of warning.

The flood was traced to a massive glacial collapse high in the Himalayas. Satellite imagery showed ice and rock falling into the river system, creating a powerful debris flow that accelerated through narrow valleys.

Scientists have cautioned that warming temperatures are making high-altitude regions less stable. Retreating glaciers, expanding lakes and thawing slopes can increase the risk of sudden collapses and downstream flooding. Each event has its own causes, and researchers will need time to reconstruct precisely what happened on August 26, but the danger posed by a warming Himalayan region is well established.

Nepal bears an unequal share of that danger. It has contributed little to global greenhouse gas emissions but faces growing exposure to glacial floods, landslides and extreme rainfall.

The country is also being asked to manage a disaster on a scale that would test far wealthier nations.

Hospitals and morgues struggled as bodies were recovered downstream. In Chitwan, authorities began temporarily burying unidentified victims after taking DNA samples and recording where each person was placed. The decision was driven by limited storage, decomposition and health concerns, but it caused distress in a country where cremation is central to Hindu funeral practice.

Families gathered at hospitals and identification centres, studying photographs and lists for any sign of those they loved. Some had travelled for hours from damaged villages. Others had returned from overseas.

The work was methodical because it had to be. Each unidentified person was photographed. Personal details were recorded where possible. DNA samples were collected in the hope that a family might one day receive an answer.

Australia initially committed $5 million to the response. On August 30, the government announced another $3 million, taking its humanitarian assistance to $8 million.

The additional package included $2 million for hygiene kits, solar lighting and other emergency supplies requested by Nepal. The Australian Defence Force was tasked with delivering the assistance, with the RAAF preparing to transport the first supplies from Queensland.

A further $1 million was directed to the Emergency Action Alliance, bringing the government's contribution to the joint appeal to $2 million. Australian public donations to the appeal had reached $1.4 million.

Twelve Australian response personnel were deployed to Kathmandu, including consular officers, crisis specialists and Australian Federal Police members, in addition to embassy staff already in Nepal.

The response carried a painful symmetry for Bhardwaj's family. The service in which he proudly worked was preparing aircraft to help Nepal while he remained among those missing.

Across Australia, Nepali, Indian and Tibetan communities gathered for vigils. Candles were placed beside flags and photographs in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and regional centres. Religious and community organisations offered prayers, counselling and assistance to families seeking information.

The gatherings reflected Australia's connection to Nepal, built through migration, education, tourism and family ties. More than 200,000 people of Nepali ancestry live in Australia, while generations of Indian Australians have travelled through Nepal on their way to Mount Kailash.

At the vigils, the scale of the tragedy was measured differently. Official lists counted the missing by nationality. Families knew them as parents, children, partners, colleagues and friends.

The final toll will take time to establish. Some people listed as missing may be alive in places without roads, electricity or telephone coverage. Others may be among the unidentified dead. Search teams continue to work through mud, damaged hydropower sites and the remains of settlements along the river.

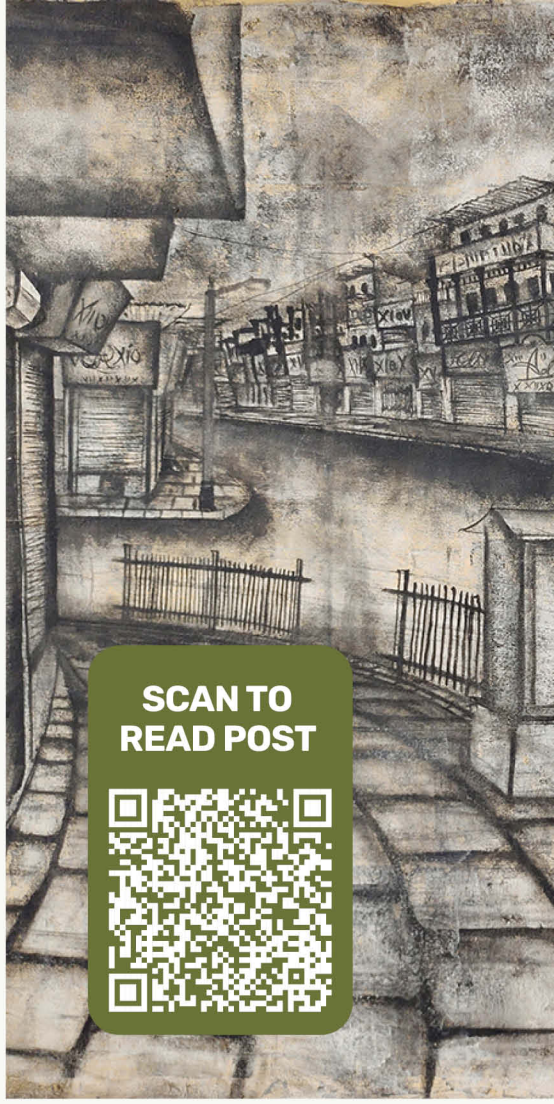
For the Australian families, the uncertainty stretches across distance, borders and incomplete information. They are trying to build a picture from phone records, tour-company messages, survivor accounts and images arriving from the disaster zone.

Their hope rests on the possibility that the mountains which isolated their loved ones may also have sheltered them.

The last confirmed message from the Isha Foundation group remains fixed at 9.05am. They had reached the border. They were preparing to come home.

Ten minutes later, the valley changed forever.

A slice of home: The NRI love affair with Indian art



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A Non-Resident Indian (NRI) art lover and buyer based in the United States acquired a contemporary artwork referring to Gandhi's three monkeys because he wanted his children to grow up with that message.

Another NRI art enthusiast acquired a large artwork by Ahmedabad-based artist Harshil Patel, which was all about the architecture, atmosphere and cultural memory of the old city of Ahmedabad, the place where the collector had grown up.

When the family later shifted to a beachfront home, the painting was given an important position. From that space, they could see the beach outside and Harshil Patel's interpretation of old Ahmedabad inside. It created a beautiful relationship between their present life and the place they had come from. And that painting also became the conversation point with people who visited his house.

For NRIs, art buying has now moved beyond just decorative aesthetic purposes or investment. It is now becoming a way of celebrating one's own identity and also passing it to the next generation.

According to the Art Basel & UBS Global art market report 2026, the global art market reached an estimated USD 59.6 billion in 2025, marking a 4% year-on-year increase. Auction sales rose by approximately 9% too. Even as the global art scenario is showing positive growth, the Indian art market has also emerged as one of the more dynamic regional ones charting its own success story.

Ask Chaitya Dhanvi Shah, Managing director of Ahmedabad-based DRS Art Company, which has a NRI client base that includes North America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Southeast Asia about the changes in the NRI art buying scenario over the years, he says, "We are seeing particular interest among collectors between approximately 30 and 50 years of age. These are people who are professionally settled, raising children outside India and carving a whole new life. They want their children to understand where they come from, and art is becoming an important way of communicating that identity."

As globalisation makes architecture, interiors and visual environments across cities increasingly similar, Shah feels art can help preserve a distinct cultural identity. "The homes may be contemporary and international, but collectors still want the works on their walls to carry an Indian soul. We have also noticed that collectors consider how an artwork will have its presence within a contemporary international home. Their interiors may be minimal and global, but the artwork gives the space personal 〈TURN TO #51〉


A Pattachitra artist displays an intricately detailed traditional artwork in Raghurajpur, Odisha's heritage craft village // Photo by Deepika Sahu



> **They (NRIs) want their children to understand where they come from, and art is becoming an important way of communicating that identity**
>
> CHAITYA DHANVI SHAH

Harshil Patel's Old City of Ahmedabad (2004), capturing the architecture and cultural memory of the historic city // Photo supplied



Ratan Parimoo's Children Playing (1956), depicting a lively group of children at play // Photo supplied



Visitors view works by celebrated Indian artist M.F. Husain at an exhibition / Photo supplied

CONTINUED FROM #50 history, emotional depth and cultural character. Subjects connected with farming, Indian cities, history, mythology, spiritual geometry, nature, architecture and cultural memory are being appreciated when interpreted in a fresh way."

Over the years, Shah feels NRI buyers are also veering towards legacy collecting. He explains, "Buyers are thinking about what they can leave for their children, whether the artist and subject will remain relevant, and whether the artwork has proper documentation and long-term collector value."

The role of digital infrastructure and availability has also added to the growth of the diaspora art buying scenario. The pandemic also changed the way one buys art all thanks to online viewing, virtual exhibitions, collector outreach and systematic digital cataloguing by art galleries. Today, both serious collectors and buyers increasingly discover, research and track artworks online in galleries digital archives before making acquisitions.

Kumar Satish, a young techie, chose to buy a painting during his recent visit to New Delhi for his London home. And he had already done his research before. "Digital space allows you to browse through paintings, catalogues and artist work history. Actually, I quite enjoyed that experience. So, when I was in Delhi for a short break, I just knew what to choose from the gallery. I hope to make my art collection rich in the years ahead."

Adds Shah from his experience, "Digitalisation has made distance less relevant, but it has made trust even more important.Earlier, an overseas collector had to depend largely on a physical gallery visit, printed catalogue or personal reference. Today, discovery may begin through a gallery website, Instagram, online articles, search engines, AI platforms, digital exhibitions or referrals shared through social media."

Sachikant Sahoo, a sixth generation Pattachitra artist from Raghurajpur, the heritage craft village in Odisha, has seen many NRI buyers in recent years coming to his village for choosing their art. "Apart from regular NRI visitors coming and buying pattachitra paintings from us directly, we also receive commissioned works. Social media and travel vlogs have also helped in creating awareness about our village."

Bengaluru-based artist Pankaj Moghe shares his experience of an NRI approaching him for a painting of a temple in Trichy. "At one of the exhibitions in Bengaluru, the NRI couple came across my work and got in touch with me. And then the commissioning of the work happened. In today's world, if you are an independent artist then you need to have your digital presence so that art enthusiasts can get in touch with you. I am also learning the ropes of social media, especially instagram."

At the same time, online auctions have also created awareness among buyers. The State of the Indian Art Market Report for FY23, published by Grant Thornton Bharat and Indian Art Investor, recorded 103 online auctions. These online auctions accounted for 75 per cent of the works sold and 45 per cent of the auction turnover, showing how strongly digital access has entered the Indian art ecosystem. A meaningful share of buyers at recent record-setting Indian auctions have been Indian or members of the Indian diaspora, and international auction houses continue to expand dedicated South Asian art sales.

India Art Fair and other fairs and events like Rann Mahotsav have expanded their footprint year on year giving new collectors a wonderful chance to choose their art,

Shah feels that with digitalisation information has become more accessible and that has encouraged many young buyers to explore Indian art. He says, "Collectors can study an artist's biography, exhibition history, publications and auction records before approaching a gallery.

They can compare different periods, subjects and prices and therefore enter the conversation with greater awareness."

However, for many artists who are engaged in different traditional art forms, digitalisation has brought about issues of authenticity and that is a matter of great concern. Sahoo says, "Our main challenge is digital prints are being sold as original work. Our work is really time-intensive. And when cheaper digital prints are easily available, it really hurts us badly. And I feel, there must be efforts to preserve our art and craft and create awareness about the original work."

In spite of certain challenges and issues, the NRI love affair with Indian art is going to be strong in the years ahead.

Deepika Sahu *has been a journalist for 30 years and she has worked with some of India's leading media houses. Right now, she is independently engaged in content creation and curation.*

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/Deepika Sahu

When two brothers heard their mother at the same time

SCAN TO WATCH



Representational Photo by Elle Cartier on Unsplash

Two baby boys born deaf gain hearing on the same day in a historic Australian surgery—a breakthrough that transforms their world and highlights the hidden costs of untreated hearing loss

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For two baby boys born deaf because of a genetic mutation, the moment sound entered their lives came together.

Identical twins underwent cochlear implant surgery on the same day, with ENT surgeon **Dr Rithvik Reddy** placing four implants during an eight-hour operation that made Australian medical history.

The complexity of operating on both babies in a single day attracted medical attention, but Reddy says the part that mattered most was what happened afterwards.

"I feel like a bit of an imposter, to be honest," he says, describing the operation as "just doing one thing twice".

For the family, the outcome was far more personal. "The most important part was that both twins got to hear mum's voice on the same day, at the same time."

The twins' experience also draws attention to a condition that affects families well beyond the operating theatre. Around one in every thousand children born in Australia has permanent hearing loss, with hospital screening identifying most cases early.

A cochlear implant is used when the normal mechanism that carries sound to the brain is not working effectively. In a healthy ear, sound travels through the ear canal and causes the eardrum and tiny bones of the middle ear to vibrate. Those vibrations reach hair cells within the cochlea, which convert them into electrical signals sent to the brain.

When those hair cells are damaged or absent, a cochlear implant bypasses them and directly stimulates the hearing nerve.

"Hearing aids in children are incredibly difficult to manage," Reddy says, particularly when a child's level of hearing loss means conventional amplification is not enough.

Hearing problems in young children are not always present at birth. Some develop later, including fluid behind the eardrum, commonly known as glue ear.

The signs can be subtle. A toddler may be slower to develop speech and language, appear slightly unsteady when walking or repeatedly ask "what?" during conversation.

Reddy's advice to parents is to take those changes seriously and seek an assessment if something appears wrong.

The consequences of hearing loss also extend well into adulthood, where Reddy sees patients who have lived with deteriorating hearing for years before seeking help.

Part of the problem, he says, is the perception that continues to surround hearing aids despite the routine acceptance of other devices used to correct sensory loss.

"You're wearing glasses, I'm wearing contact lenses. There's no stigma surrounding that," he says. "That all of a sudden you have to wear a hearing aid and everyone thinks that you've got a disability. I think that's quite sad."

Reddy also points to the connection between untreated hearing loss and dementia risk, describing hearing loss as an important modifiable risk factor. He says mild hearing loss can double the risk, moderate hearing loss can triple it and severe hearing loss can increase it fivefold.

"If you treat the hearing loss, that risk reverses," he says.

The effect of restoring hearing can also be seen in more immediate ways.

Reddy recalls treating an older man who had become quiet as his hearing deteriorated. Family members had become accustomed to speaking around him or answering on his behalf.

After receiving a cochlear implant, the patient returned wanting the procedure performed on his other ear.

"He actually used the phrase, 'I don't feel like a pot plant anymore'," Reddy says.

For many patients, hearing problems are less obvious. Tinnitus, experienced as ringing, buzzing or humming without an external source, is among the conditions Reddy regularly encounters.

"Tinnitus is incredibly common," he says. "It's one of the most frustrating presentations that I see, because often there isn't a cause, and there isn't a terrific treatment."

He describes the experience by comparing it with a candle burning in a dark room. When the surroundings are completely quiet, the sound can become difficult to ignore. Introducing gentle background noise, such as a fan, soft rain sounds or a low radio, can make it less dominant.

Across childhood hearing loss, tinnitus and age-related deterioration, a common issue is how easily changes in hearing can alter someone's involvement in everyday life.

It may begin with a toddler falling behind in speech, an adult struggling to follow conversation or an older relative steadily increasing the television volume.

Reddy's advice is to recognise those changes early rather than accept them as something that must simply be lived with.

For the twin boys, that intervention came at the beginning of life.

Their operation was technically unusual, with two babies, four implants and eight hours of surgery on the same day. But the measure of its success was much simpler: two brothers able to hear their mother's voice together.



Australia grows the food. Who gets the money?

Australia's food system excels at farming exports but struggles with value-adding, affordability, and supply-chain transparency, new research reveals

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Australia grows enough food to feed roughly 70 million people, exports 71 per cent of what its farms produce and has just recorded the first $100 billion year in agricultural production. Yet it cannot officially say how every grocery dollar is divided between farmers, processors, supermarkets and everyone else in the food chain, according to new research that argues Australia's greatest food challenge begins after produce leaves the farm.

The fourteenth report in *The Balance Sheet* research series audits Australia's food economy from paddock to plate, examining farms, food manufacturers, supermarkets, households, export markets and the supply chains linking them.

Its central conclusion frames the paper.

Australia has built "a food economy that excels at producing and exporting food and struggles with almost everything that happens after it leaves the farm."

The report finds Australian agriculture reached a record $101.4 billion in production during 2025-26, four years ahead of the industry's own target, while agricultural exports climbed to almost $85 billion. The same official outlook, however, forecasts exports will fall 9 per cent next year and average broadacre farm profit will plunge 〈TURN TO #55〉

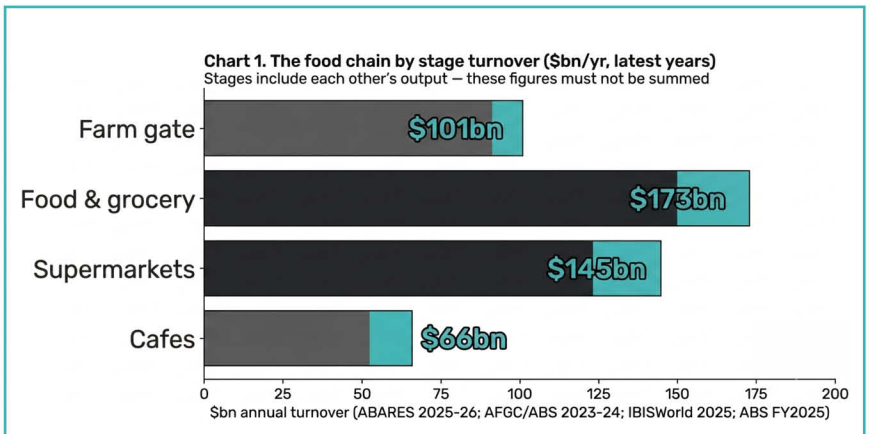


Figure 1. The chain by stage turnover

Sources: *ABARES; AFGC/ABS; IBISWorld; ABS. Stages overlap: these are gross turnovers, not value added, and must not be summed*



❮CONTINUED FROM #54❯ 70 per cent as higher fuel and fertiliser costs, weaker prices and changing seasonal conditions bite.

"There is no average Australian farm," the report concludes. "There are at least two farm economies."

That contrast runs throughout the report.

Australia now exports food to 169 countries, yet the record export year is partly attributed to circumstances beyond its control. Beef exports reached an all-time high as the United States experienced its smallest cattle herd since 1951, creating exceptional demand for Australian producers.

"Records built on a competitor's drought are revenue, not structure," the report observes.

The report's most original finding concerns the food dollar itself.

Australia has debated supermarket pricing for years, yet no official agency produces a food-dollar series showing how retail food spending is shared across the supply chain. The last comprehensive government study dates back more than two decades.

Using an indicative reconstruction based on Australian and international evidence, the report estimates farmers receive between $14 and $19 of every $100 spent on groceries, processors about $29, while supermarkets retain a gross margin of roughly $25 to $30 before wages, rents, energy and other costs reduce net profit to about $3.

The report argues the absence of an official food-dollar series is itself a policy finding.

Its supermarket chapter reaches a similarly balanced conclusion.

Coles and Woolworths account for 67 per cent of grocery sales, and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission found Australia's major supermarket chains among the world's most profitable. It also found margins increased during the inflationary period.

However, the regulator did not conclude the companies engaged in price gouging, recommended no break-up of the sector and instead focused on stronger consumer protections, pricing transparency and supplier rules. Since then, the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct has become mandatory and Coles has been found by the Federal Court to have engaged in misleading discount advertising, while proceedings involving Woolworths ❮TURN TO #56❯

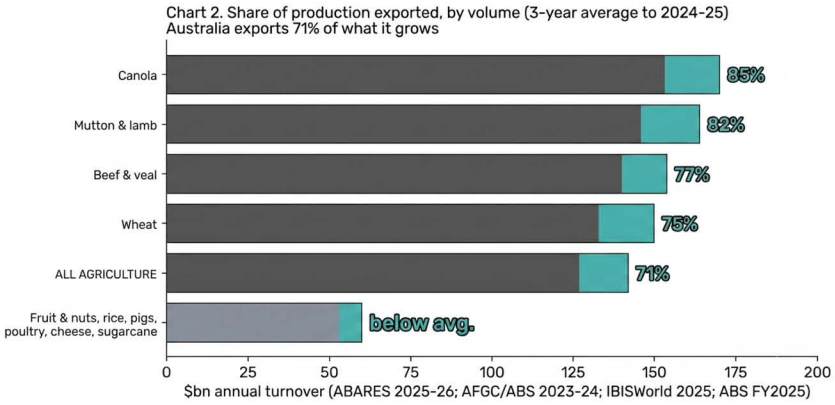


Figure 2. Export orientation by commodity

Sources: *ABARES Snapshot of Australian Agriculture 2026. Shares are by volume, not value*



Figure 3. The record and the cliff

Sources: *ABARES Snapshot 2026 (real values); Agricultural Commodities June 2026. Profit figures are averages across broadacre farms*



Australia now exports food to 169 countries, yet the record export year is partly attributed to circumstances beyond its control. Beef exports reached an all-time high



CONTINUED FROM #55 remain unresolved.

The household chapter identifies another paradox.

Food now accounts for a smaller share of household spending than at any previous time, yet it has rarely felt more expensive. The report argues the explanation lies not in current inflation but in permanently higher prices. Food inflation has eased from its 9.2 per cent peak in late 2022 to 3.3 per cent, but prices remain about 25 per cent higher than they were in 2021.

For lower-income households the issue extends beyond perception. Foodbank estimates 3.5 million householdsexperienced food insecurity during 2025.

The report also argues Australia has become increasingly dependent on imported inputs despite its status as a food-exporting nation.

Australia imports about 62 per cent of the seafood it consumes, no longer produces urea after the closure of its last domestic plant in 2023, and depends on imported fertiliser, agricultural chemicals, machinery and fuel to sustain production.

"Food security is input security," the report concludes.

One of the paper's strongest chapters examines manufacturing, arguing Australia's largest manufacturing industry is quietly losing ground. Food and grocery manufacturing employs almost 300,000 people, yet research spending has fallen below 2009-10 levels and the debate over whether Australia exports too many raw agricultural products without adding value remains unresolved.

Labour shortages remain another structural weakness.

Agriculture relies heavily on seasonal migrant workers, while the report notes the TURN TO #57

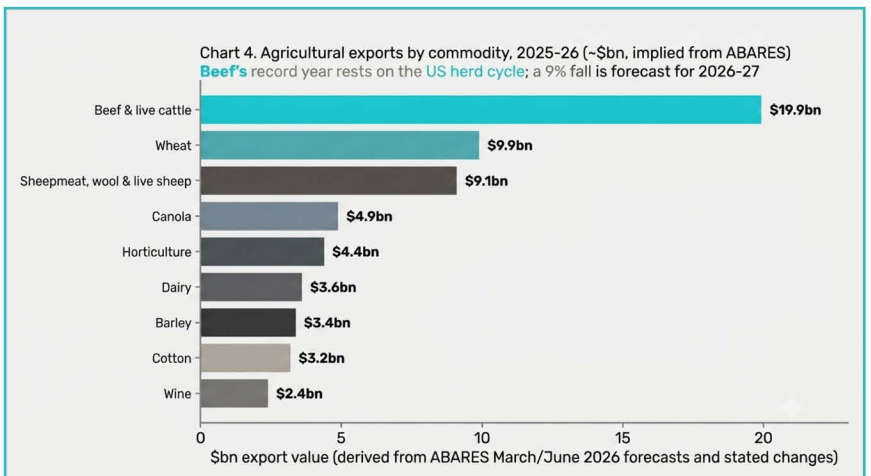


Figure 4. The export league, 2025-26

Sources: *ABARES March/June 2026 forecasts and stated changes; beef value includes live cattle. Labelled derived; forecast falls in 2026-27 shown in text.*

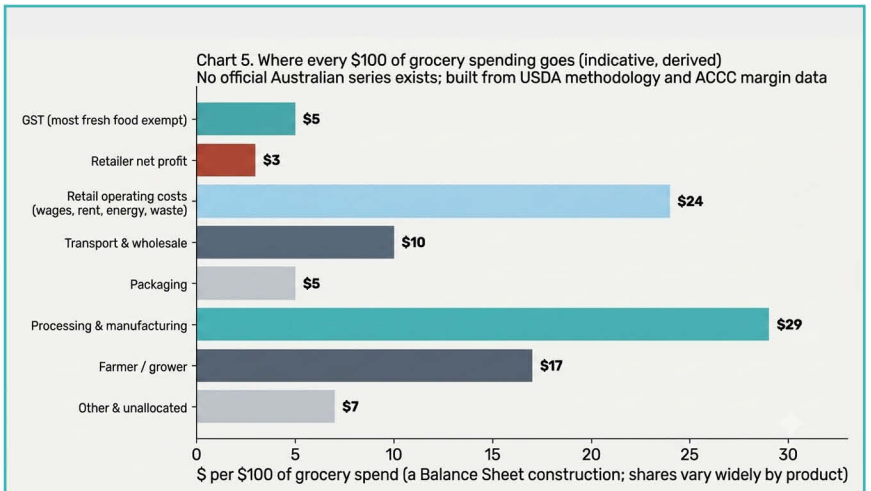


Figure 5. Every $100 of grocery spending, indicative

A Balance Sheet construction from USDA food-dollar methodology, ACCC margin data and Australian point examples; no official series exists. Shares vary widely by product.

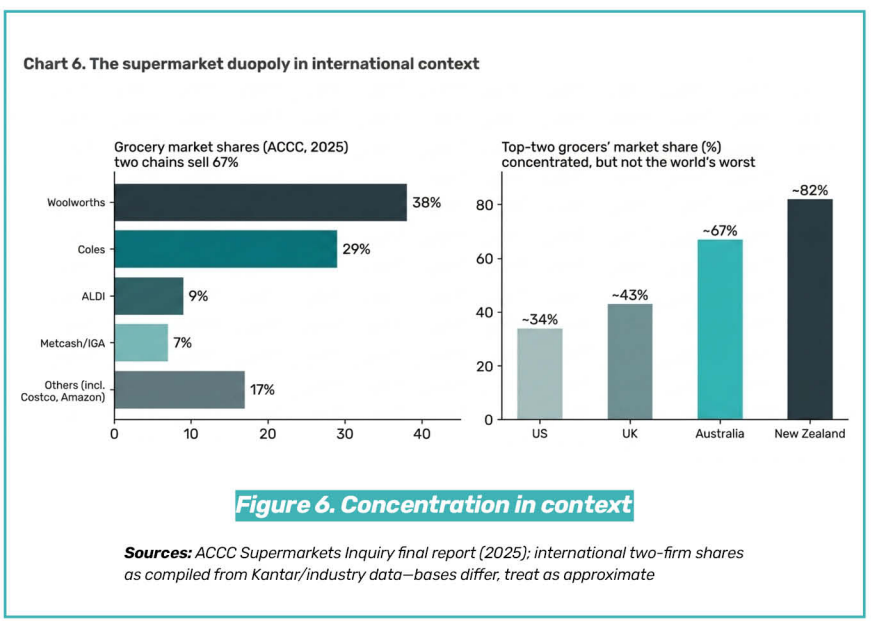


Figure 6. Concentration in context

Sources: *ACCC Supermarkets Inquiry final report (2025); international two-firm shares as compiled from Kantar/industry data—bases differ, treat as approximate*





CONTINUED FROM #56 largest survey of migrant workers ever undertaken in Australia found two-thirds were paid below legal minimum rates. It also questions the language of labour shortages, arguing that "a shortage at a given wage is not a shortage, it is a price."

Climate change, meanwhile, has already reduced average farm profits by 23 per cent, according to ABARES modelling cited in the report, while the productivity gains that have historically offset those losses are slowing. Agricultural productivity growth has fallen from about 2.2 per cent a year to 0.7 per cent, while research investment continues to decline.

The report argues the food economy's greatest long-term risk is not production itself but the erosion of the systems that support it, including research, manufacturing capability, input security and labour.

Its final verdict distinguishes production from the wider food economy.

Australia has built a world-class agricultural production system, it concludes, but faces mounting challenges in affordability, value-adding, supply-chain resilience and the distribution of returns across the food chain.

"The paddock performs," the report concludes. "It is everything between the paddock and the plate that carries the strain."

This report is based on publicly available data and analysis. It is not financial advice and should not be relied on for investment decisions. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. If you spot any factual error, calculation issue or omission, please email sid@indiansun.com.au so it can be reviewed and corrected if necessary.

Read the report here: ***https://thebalancesheet.xyz/issue-14***

Chart 7. The household food budget: a smaller share than any previous generation, at a higher level than any recent year

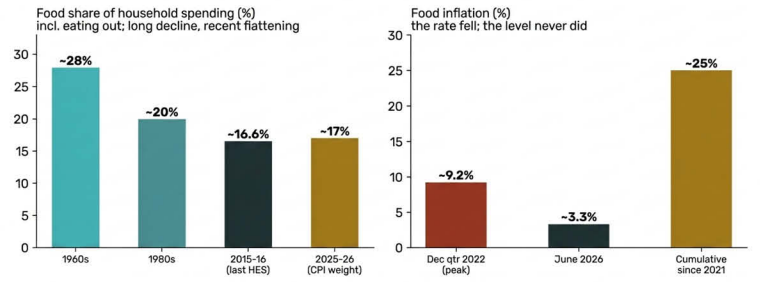


Figure 7. The household food budget

Sources: *ABS HES 2015-16 and CPI weights (long arc approximate); ABS CPI June 2026; cumulative figure derived from CPI series. Foodbank measure is broad and survey-based*

Chart 8. Water volatility and reallocation: the 2024-26 southern Basin cycle

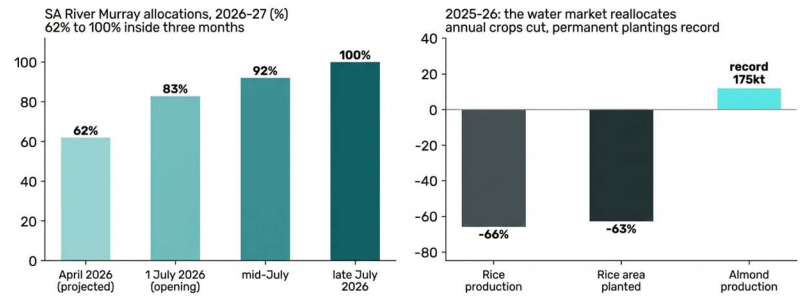


Figure 8. The 2024-26 water cycle

Sources: *SA Department for Environment and Water allocation announcements; ABARES Australian Crop Report June 2026; Rabobank/industry almond estimates*



Climate change, meanwhile, has already reduced average farm profits by 23 per cent, according to ABARES modelling cited in the report, while the productivity gains that have historically offset those losses are slowing

The $4.4 trillion question: What is Australia's super system really funding?

Australia's $4.4 trillion super system now invests half offshore, fuels global markets, yet mostly buys existing assets, not new ventures

OUR REPORTER
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Australia's compulsory **superannuation system** has grown into a second financial system holding about one-third of the nation's financial assets, sending an increasing share of retirement savings overseas and attracting tax concessions almost equal to the cost of the Age Pension, according to new research examining what the $4.4 trillion pool does to the economy beyond retirement saving.

The study, the seventh report in The Balance Sheet research series, tracks the system from $148 billion when compulsory superannuation began in 1992, about one-third of GDP, to $4,437.9 billion at March this year, roughly one and a half times Australia's annual economic output and the seventh-largest pension pool in the world despite Australia being only around the world's fourteenth-largest economy.

Only a handful of 〈TURN TO #59〉

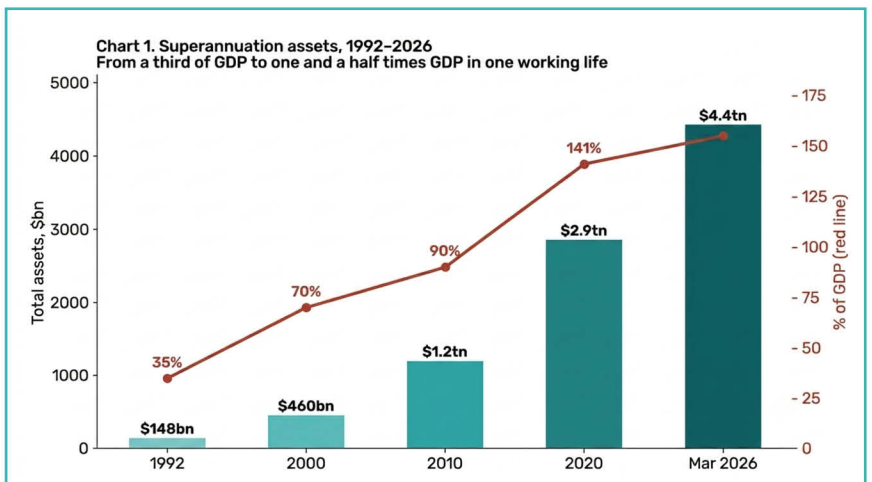


Figure 1. Total superannuation assets and share of GDP

Sources: *APRA; ASFA; RBA Financial Stability Review; early ratios derived*



«CONTINUED FROM #58» countries operate pension systems larger than their annual economies, making Australia's compulsory superannuation system one of the world's largest institutional investors relative to the size of its economy.

Its most consequential finding concerns where the money now goes. International shares have become the largest single asset class, accounting for 32 per cent of fund portfolios compared with 23 per cent for Australian shares, while about half the pool is now invested offshore, up from 35 per cent a decade ago. Funds themselves expect 50 to 60 cents of every new investment dollar to be directed overseas. The report attributes the shift largely to scale. Australia's retirement savings pool has grown larger than the domestic sharemarket can readily absorb.

"Australian retirement savings increasingly finance other countries' capital formation," the report says.

The research also tested one of the most common claims about compulsory superannuation: that automatic contributions continually push asset prices higher.

It found a more nuanced picture.

The system received $226.1 billion in contributions and paid out $143.5 billion in benefits in the year to March, leaving net inflows of $74.5 billion. Of that, an estimated $17 billion reaches Australian listed shares under current asset allocations, equivalent to about 1 per cent of annual sharemarket turnover, making super funds close to price-takers in day-to-day trading.

However, the system's overall annual inflows exceed all new listed equity raised in 2025 and the value of every commercial property transaction completed in Australia.

That, the report says, gives large funds "considerable potential influence in thin primary and unlisted markets", although the actual impact depends on how those flows are allocated.

"Super's allocated flows are too small to drive the ASX tick by tick, and the system is too large to be absent from any auction of an airport, a port, a toll road or a privatisation," the report says.

The ownership footprint reflects that influence.

Through direct investments and IFM Investors, the $234 billion infrastructure manager owned by fifteen industry funds, superannuation now holds substantial stakes in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth airports, NSW Ports, half of electricity distributor Ausgrid, about one-quarter of Endeavour Energy and the largest shareholding in toll road operator Transurban. Estimates suggest super funds own between one-fifth and more than one-third of the Australian sharemarket, depending on whether self-managed super funds are included.

What the money buys becomes the report's central distinction.

Less than 1 per cent of super assets are invested in venture capital, the part of the market that finances new companies. Of the $99 billion invested in Australian «TURN TO #60»

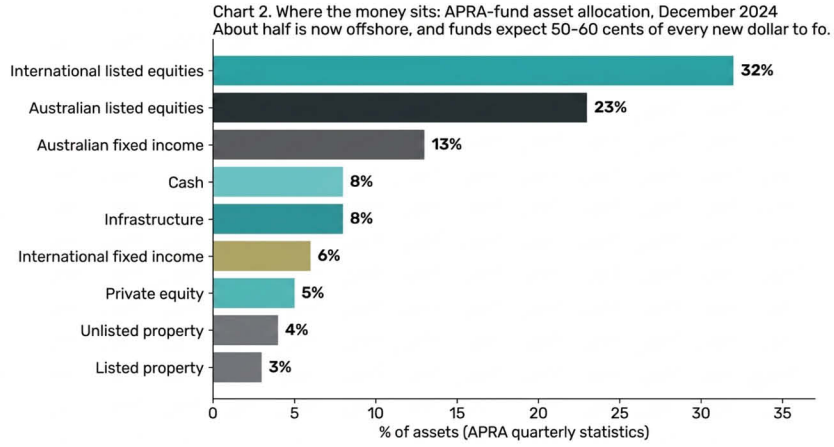


Figure 2. APRA-regulated fund asset allocation, December 2024

Sources: *APRA quarterly statistics; ASFA*



Representational Photo by Vitaly Gariev on Unsplash

International shares have become the largest single asset class, accounting for 32 per cent of fund portfolios compared with 23 per cent for Australian shares

‹CONTINUED FROM #59›

renewable electricity generation since 2020, the country's thirty largest super funds contributed only about $771 million directly. Instead, the report finds many of the system's largest investments have involved privatised infrastructure and existing assets changing hands.

Its measured conclusion is that the marginal super dollar continues to purchase predominantly existing assets and is increasingly invested overseas.

On the budget, the report finds superannuation tax concessions will cost $60.7 billion this financial year, within $2 billion of total Age Pension spending and more than the annual cost of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

About two-thirds of those concessions flow to the highest-income fifth of Australians and around 60 per cent accrue to men.

The Retirement Income Review found increasing the Superannuation Guarantee to 12 per cent costs more in tax concessions than it saves in pension spending until around 2055.

Yet the substitution the system was designed to support is becoming increasingly visible.

The proportion of Australians aged between 65 and 69 receiving the Age Pension has fallen from 60 per cent in 2012 to 26 per cent today, while pension spending is projected to decline from 2.3 per cent to 2.0 per cent of GDP by 2062-63 despite Australia's ageing population. The report attributes the change to superannuation alongside changes to pension eligibility, asset-testing rules and higher workforce participation.

The median member remains well short of affluent. Median balances stand at $236,000 for men and $175,000 for women aged between 60 and 64, leaving a gender gap of 26 per cent. At the same time, an estimated $5 billion to $6 billion in compulsory employer contributions goes unpaid each year, largely affecting casual and lower-paid workers.

The report also challenges one of the most persistent concerns surrounding superannuation: that retiring Baby Boomers will eventually force funds to sell large volumes of assets.

Treasury's own modelling suggests benefit ‹TURN TO #61›

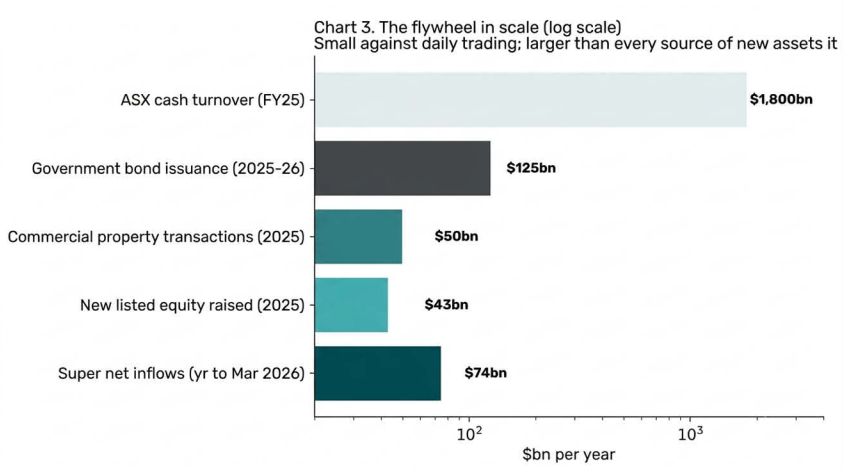


Figure 3. Super's net inflows against market turnover and the supply of new assets (log scale)

Sources: *APRA; ASX; AOFM; commercial property transaction data*

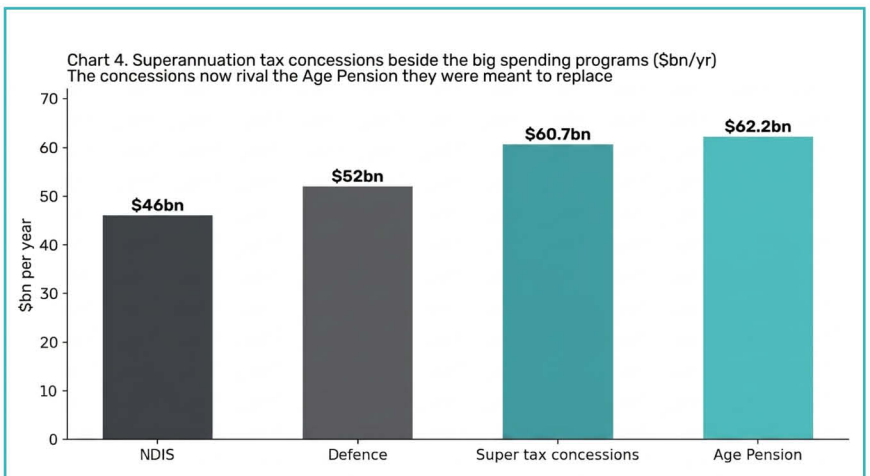


Figure 4. Superannuation tax concessions beside major programs, latest years

Sources: *Treasury TEIS 2025-26; ANAO; budget papers*

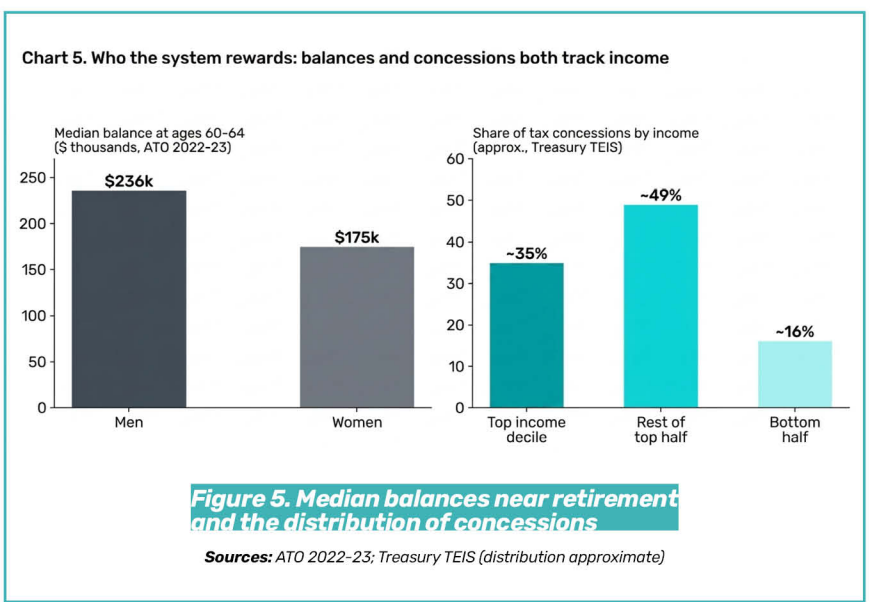


Figure 5. Median balances near retirement and the distribution of concessions

Sources: *ATO 2022-23; Treasury TEIS (distribution approximate)*



❮CONTINUED FROM #60❯ payments will not exceed annual contributions until sometime after 2060.

Instead, the research finds retirees are generally not exhausting their balances.

Most Australians die with a substantial proportion of their super still intact, and official projections suggest annual death benefits will rise from about $17 billion today to around $130 billion by 2059. Roughly one dollar in every three leaving the system is projected to do so as an inheritance rather than retirement income.

The report describes the trend as "a retirement-income scheme evolving into a tax-advantaged intergenerational wealth-transfer vehicle", a weakness that contributed to Australia receiving its lowest-ever ranking in this year's Mercer Global Pension Index.

A pool of this scale inevitably attracts policy interest.

The report examines confirmed proposals, including Treasury's plan to adjust superannuation performance benchmarks so they no longer discourage investment in housing, renewable energy and data centres; the industry's commitment at the White House to increase investment in the United States towards US$1.44 trillion by 2035; and former prime minister Paul Keating's proposal that super funds take on parts of Centrelink's pension administration, a suggestion that prompted support for closer cooperation alongside warnings against any merger.

The report notes none of those proposals has yet become settled government policy.

In keeping with the Balance Sheet methodology, the paper devotes a full section to evidence challenging its own conclusions. It credits compulsory super with increasing national saving, an outcome many developed economies have struggled to achieve, while noting research suggesting much of the cost of higher compulsory contributions is ultimately borne through slower wage growth.

Each major finding is assigned a confidence rating. The drawdown and inheritance projections receive medium-low confidence, while any effect of superannuation on housing prices is rated low confidence.

Read the report here: ***https://thebalancesheet.xyz/issue-07***

Chart 6. Pension reliance is falling, fastest among the newly retired
IGR 2023 projects pension spending falling from 2.3% to 2.0% of GDP by 2062-63 despite ageing

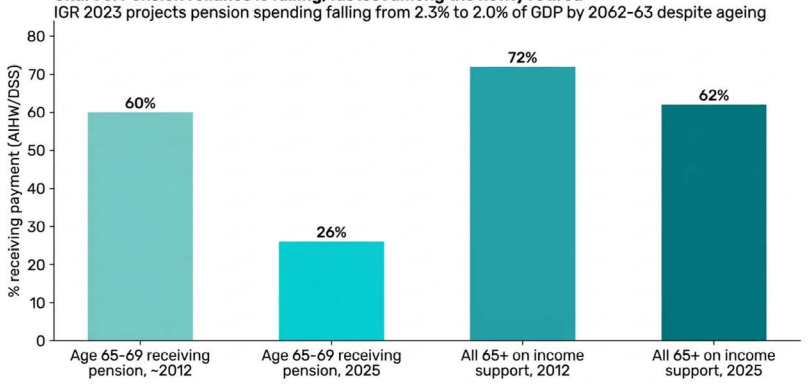


Figure 6. Pension receipt is falling fastest among the newly retired

Sources: *AIHW; DSS; IGR 2023*

Chart 7. The system is still filling, and increasingly it empties through estates

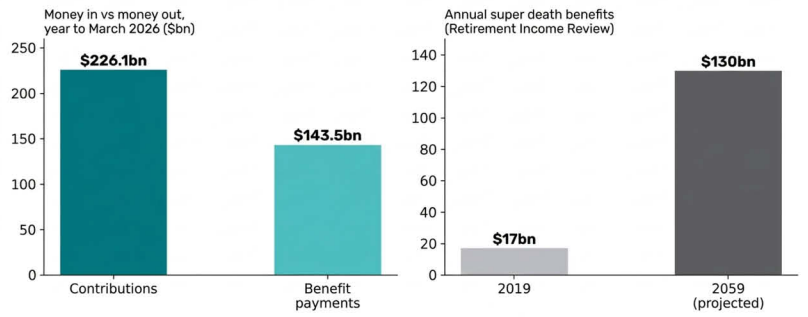


Figure 7. Flows in and out, and the projected rise of bequests

Sources: *APRA; Retirement Income Review*





Most Australians die with a substantial proportion of their super still intact, and official projections suggest annual death benefits will rise from about $17 billion today to around $130 billion by 2059

Kritika's exhibition *Pitch* draws on her Dalit heritage and uses materials associated with labour, ritual and social status to examine how history can remain embedded in physical substances



Artist Kirtika Kain, whose exhibition Pitch is showing at Campbelltown Arts Centre. Photo: Nicholas Smith

Kirtika Kain's 'Pitch' traces caste, labour and memory through material

OUR REPORTER
@the_indian_sun

Kirtika Kain's exploration of caste and its continuing presence in the diaspora has come to **Campbelltown Arts Centre** as the Australian artist prepares to take part in the 18th Lyon Biennale.

Her exhibition *Pitch* draws on her Dalit heritage and uses materials associated with labour, ritual and social status to examine how history can remain embedded in physical substances.

Tar is central to the exhibition. Across Kain's works, it carries a history of extraction, labour and transformation, alongside cultural associations with ceremony and medicine. Gold and turmeric also form part of a material language through which she considers cultural memory, class and inherited social structures.

The exhibition was first presented at Murray Art Museum Albury and is now being shown in partnership with Campbelltown Arts Centre. Its Campbelltown presentation comes at an important stage in Kain's career following her selection for the Lyon Biennale.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to work directly with the artist during an intensive printmaking workshop at the centre on Saturday, 29 August.

Kirtika Kain will lead a printmaking workshop inspired by her exhibition *Pitch* at Campbelltown Arts Centre on 29 August. The exhibition continues until 13 September



Installation view of Kirtika Kain's Pitch at Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2026. Photo: Silversalt Photography

The session, titled Layered *Impressions: Exploring Print Techniques* with Kirtika Kain, will run from 10am to 2.30pm. It has been developed in response to *Pitch* and will examine printmaking through processes of layering, transfer and transformation.

Participants will use inks, gold leaf and textured materials to build layered compositions. Kain will introduce monoprinting with acetate, drypoint, chine-collé and lino techniques, with surfaces used at different stages as both printing plates and finished impressions.

The workshop will also cover overprinting, resist methods and casting impressions. Rather than treating materials solely as artistic tools, the session will consider the cultural histories attached to substances such as gold and pigment and how those meanings can be extended or reframed through art.

Participants will be encouraged to draw on their own relationships with materials and memory while developing a personal approach to image-making. Each person will complete a print in which successive layers preserve a record of the creative process.

No previous printmaking experience is required. A light lunch will be provided during the one-hour break.

Pitch will remain on display at Campbelltown Arts Centre until 13 September.

For more information and bookings, visit Campbelltown Arts

What makes *Orko* compelling is its interrogation from within a contemporary migrant community





Orko: Shakespearean tragedy unfolds in Sydney





BHUSHAN SALUNKE
@the_indian_sun

Nautanki Theatre's ***Orko***, written by Saurabh Bhattacharya, closely follows Shakespeare's *Othello*, adapting it to the local Indian diaspora. The result is a timely and culturally resonant drama that explores love, jealousy, belonging and domestic violence through a distinctly Australian lens. The production was staged at Riverside Theatres' Live @ PHIVE in Parramatta from 30 July to 1 August 2026.

At the centre of the story is Orko Sanyal, a hardworking migrant who has spent almost three decades building a successful life in Australia, including a chain of restaurants bearing his name. During a visit to Calcutta, he meets Damini, a young woman who captivates him. Their rapid romance and marriage appear to offer Orko a new beginning, but on their return to Sydney, tensions emerge within their relationship and among their friends, especially his close mate, Vish Banerjee

What makes *Orko* compelling is its interrogation from within a contemporary migrant community. The familiar themes of outsider identity, possessiveness, suspicion and manipulation—take on new meaning when placed against the experiences of Indian Australians negotiating family expectations, cultural identity and social status.

The play's attention to Damini, rather than treating her primarily as the victim, *Orko* places her experience closer to the heart of the work. This gives the production a sharper contemporary purpose, particularly in its examination of domestic violence and the way its effects extend beyond a couple to families, friendships and the wider community.

Orko's personal anxieties are not presented in isolation; they are shaped by migration, masculinity, reputation and the pressure to preserve an apparently successful life. That combination gives the drama emotional weight while also making the story relevant to audiences well beyond the South Asian community.

Orko modernises an old tragedy—it asks whose stories are heard, whose suffering is overlooked and how violence can remain hidden behind respectability.

All the actors delivered strong performances, with Neel Banerjee stealing the show as Vish, the scheming mastermind who poisons Orko's mind by planting seeds of suspicion about Damini's alleged infidelity and extramarital affair.

Director: Joyraj Bhattacharjee

Cast: Aparupa Samanta, Balarka Banerjee, Rupayan Ghosh & Neel Banerjee, Rima Sen, Sanjeev Raja

Lead creative: Joyraj Bhattacharjee

Creative assistance: Neel Banerjee

Set design: Soham Apte

Lighting design: Rajdeep Roy

Styling & wardrobe: Rajshri Roy

Photos: Kaushik Kukade, Capturing Expression Photography

Orko was supported by the NSW government through Create NSW.

Nautanki Theatre's production represents an important contribution to Sydney's multicultural theatre scene. By bringing a South Asian Australian story to the stage, *Orko* demonstrates how classic works can be reinterpreted to speak directly to contemporary communities.

It is a thoughtful, confronting and worthwhile piece of theatre; one that stays with the audience after the final scene.

The playfulness of the language and the humour in Shree's writing were certainly felt throughout the event



Geetanjali Shree. Photo supplied

Where borders open: An evening with Geetanjali Shree

MADHU RAWAL
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Sadly, we know little about many of our literary talents until they earn recognition in the West. Last night, I attended "Geetanjali Shree in Conversation," an event organised by Sydney Writers' Festival at the State Library of NSW, centred on her International Booker Prize-winning novel *Tomb of Sand*, originally written in Hindi and translated into English by Daisy Rockwell.

The evening began on an amusing note. Geetanjali Shree, serene and composed, entered the hall and described the event as a blind date for both parties. I cannot speak for her, but for the audience it was an authentic, delightful and deeply reflective date.

Asked where she found inspiration, Shree said: "From the original idea of a novel to its subject matter, language, and textual strategies, little in my writing is thought out beforehand. Things evolve along with writing.

"For this book, I think what set me off was an image of an older adult lying with her back turned to the family, a very common sight: people who have given up on life. That image somehow formed inside me, stirred my curiosity, and created a character who reclaims her life and identity as the story takes shape."

When asked about her writing style and use of English words in the original Hindi novel, Shree said it revealed much about India's history, its colonial past and the place of English among educated Indians. It could feel almost unnatural, she said, to replace certain English words with Hindi or to write entirely in Hindi.

She said languages in India's multilingual society were creatively mixed in everyday speech, crossing languages and dialects. Any push towards uniformity and monolingualism, she said, was an unwanted product of narrow historical and political developments.

India, she said, was an organically pluralistic society with a long tradition of religious coexistence and interaction.

The India-Pakistan border, both physical and conceptual, is central to the plot of *Tomb of Sand*. "A border does not enclose, it opens out," Ma says in the novel. "It is a bridge between two connected parts." In the sprawling work, Shree questions the rigidity of borders between genders, countries and family members.

As the conversation continued, Shree spoke about visiting the Wagah border to observe the ceremonial drill by security forces on both sides.

She said all she could feel was the false ideology of Partition and the loud slogans of patriotism blasting across the venue.

Hatred, violence and politics, she said, continue to plague people on both sides of the border.

When an audience member asked whether India and Pakistan could be reunified, she said: "A nation is your identity. To make a union possible, it has to be a new entity." Her answer reflected the complexity of the question.

Asked about the role of translators in literature, Shree noted that Leo Tolstoy, whom she described as "the greatest of all novelists," would not have reached and inspired generations around the world without translation.

On the translation of her own book, she said what mattered was the rapport between author and translator, including a shared way of looking at things and feeling deeply about them.

The playfulness of the language and the humour in Shree's writing were certainly felt throughout the event.

Her reading of a short Hindi excerpt from the book brought back the richness and vibrancy of a language many of us have lost touch with.

The large number of Australians in the audience showed that the world of literature has opened as never before, with readers turning to books from many different places. Literary conversations are more global, and no language or literature today operates in a closed, hermetic space.





Raksha Bandhan gone to the dogs; literally!

BHUSHAN SALUNKE
@the_indian_sun

Rakhi, or Raksha Bandhan, is celebrated to honour the bond of love, care and mutual protection between siblings. Traditionally, a sister ties a sacred thread, the rakhi, around her brother's wrist, while he promises to support and protect her. Sweets, blessings and gifts are usually exchanged as part of the celebration.

This year, however, Rakhi became entangled in controversy after GIVA, a jewellery brand, released an advertisement featuring Kriti Sanon, a Bollywood actor, in a revealing outfit while tying rakhi on both a man and a dog.

The campaign ruffled more than a few feathers, and social media promptly exploded. Some viewers felt that tying rakhi to a dog trivialised the religious and familial meaning of Raksha Bandhan. Others accused the brand of mocking Hindu traditions. Supporters of Kriti, meanwhile, defended the advertisement as a modern portrayal of pets as members of the family, women empowerment and smashing patriarchy

The majority of critics appeared less concerned about the dog than about Kriti's outfit, which they considered inappropriate for the occasion. In the resulting uproar, one party emerged as the obvious winner: the jewellery brand, which had successfully turned a festival advertisement into a viral marketing event.

Amid the heated debate, Appu caught up with Kriti, who was taking her dog, Rocky, for a walk. Rocky was proudly wearing his rakhi around his neck and appeared completely unconcerned about the controversy.

"You have certainly caused a stir," Appu said. "Would you care to explain?"

Kriti was straight to the point. "People should stop telling women what they should and should not wear. I am a modern, Westernised woman—strong, independent and empowered. My body. My choice. I'm free to do whatever I want with my body. Indians are used to seeing Bollywood actresses in revealing outfits. Everyone enjoys the hot item-number songs, including the children. Moviegoers have seen me in scanty clothes in my films, so what's the big deal about my ❮TURN TO #69❯

> She adjusted the jewellery around her neck while Appu made a determined effort to keep his eyes fixed firmly on her face



<CONTINUED FROM #68> showing cleavage?"

She adjusted the jewellery around her neck while Appu made a determined effort to keep his eyes fixed firmly on her face and not let the roving eyes wander over her breasts.

Appu said, "There is nothing inherently wrong with showing skin, but many people felt that the outfit was inappropriate for the occasion. You wouldn't wear a bikini to a temple, would you?"

Kriti said. "I do not believe in Raksha Bandhan anyway. I do not need a man to protect me. I am perfectly capable of looking after myself. It is an oppressive tradition created by patriarchy to make women feel weak, vulnerable and dependent on men forever. I am smashing patriarchy with this outfit."

Appu looked confused. "If you do not believe in Raksha Bandhan, why did you agree to do the advertisement?"

Kriti paused.

"Many people are calling you a hypocrite," Appu continued. "They say that in a Muslim Eid advertisement you were fully covered and looked demure, whereas for Raksha Bandhan you were bearing them all"

Kriti shrugged. "Look, I am an actor. I do what the director wants me to do. The money was good. I got to keep the jewellery and clothes, and now I am a national celebrity. What more do I want? Frankly, the advertisement was not really about Raksha Bandhan. It was about selling jewellery. I was wearing a great deal of it around my neck, and the director thought the best way to direct attention towards it was via the cleavage. Sex sells."

Appu nodded slowly. "But why tie a rakhi to a dog? Some people are even jokingly asking why the brother was fully dressed instead of being shirtless and wearing only underwear!"

Kriti shot back. "Raksha Bandhan is about appreciating anyone who shows love and care. Rocky is an excellent protector. The other day, when a burglar broke into my home, Rocky wrestled him to the ground, tied him up and called the police."

Rocky barked modestly, as if confirming the account.

Kriti continued. "This advertisement has had several positive effects. Sales of pet rakhis have soared. People are now tying rakhis on their pet dogs, cats, goats and pigs. The revealing rakhi outfit has now been normalized and popular with the girls, and men are lining up to have rakhis tied on them."

Appu concluded. "The real winner, of course, is GIVA. Before the advertisement, relatively few people knew the jewellery brand. After the controversy, everyone knows the brand. That is not merely advertising. That is a masterclass in turning outrage into brand awareness"

As for Kriti, she hinted that the controversy might lead to further commercial opportunities. She said. "I am currently in talks with a lingerie brand. They are interested in having me celebrate Karva Chauth in a bikini on a beach location in Australia."

Rocky barked again. Whether it was laughter, disagreement or a request for biscuits, nobody could say. But one thing was certain, he would definitely feature in the Karva Chauth ad too.

*(**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author)*

Kriti shrugged. "Look, I am an actor. I do what the director wants me to do. The money was good. I got to keep the jewellery and clothes, and now I am a national celebrity..."

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