

The President's Message

I was appalled when I read the verdict that Ricki Petrusic, one of seven individuals who attacked six Indian men in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne, was given a jail sentence for three years with the sentence wholly suspended. Ricki Petrusic had pleaded guilty to two charges of robbery, three counts of attempted armed robbery and one count of armed robbery. The presiding judge, Judge Gaynor came to the extraordinary conclusion that despite the fact that the gang led by Ricki Petrusic admitted that they were 'Punji hunting' (singling out Indians from Punjab as targets) they were not racist.



Dr. Gurdip Aurora



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The gangs' behavior was clearly predatory. Furthermore, Judge Gaynor deemed that the Indian victims were soft targets and hence were attacked. Therefore, how the judge came to that erroneous conclusion defies all imagination. The judge would have known that such attacks on Indian students had been continuing unabated for some time. What judge Gaynor did was give Ricki Petrusic a slap on the wrist, and on top of that reminded him that he could be 'very, very proud' of himself in being so determined to rehabilitate. My question is this: What sort of message does it send to other would-be offenders? And does this sentence really reflect basic sentencing principles such as general and specific deterrence?

Innocent people were attacked by 'Feral gangs' such as the one led by Ricki Petrusic and neither the police nor the Labor state government took strong or decisive measures to stop such violence against Indian students or its own citizens. As an Australian citizen I feel ashamed that our law enforcing agencies did nothing to stop such crimes and as a consequence one such attack led to the death of Nitin Garg. The youth who committed the murder carried a knife with him which itself is a very serious offence. I am eagerly awaiting Justice Coghlan's decision in this murder case but note that whatever the decision, no punitive action against the perpetrator will bring back Nitin Garg. He came here to study and in turn lost his life by an unnecessary and stupid act of violence.

The first generation Indians who migrated to Australia in the late sixties and seventies and their children have been model law abiding citizens and to see their fellow men attacked by gangs carrying knives, iron rods and base ball bats because they were soft targets has been a heart wrenching experience. As an added blow, we are now witness to the inconsistencies in the punishments handed out to perpetrators, most of which have been seen to be far below community expectations.

During the last elections due to frustration at the inconsistencies in punishment meted out to these 'gangs', the community leaders and fellow Indians met with and implored the leader of the opposition, Mr. Ted Baillieu to introduce mandatory sentencing to prevent 'gangs' from committing serious crimes on innocent people and soft targets.

I am generally against mandatory sentencing but I felt that law and order in the state had become so bad that it was a desperate, but necessary last resort measure. It was clear to me that the law enforcing agencies, the police and the courts had failed to curb the violence on our streets.

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"Mandatory sentences" according to Senior Counsel Ruth McColl, are those sentences which a judicial officer is required to impose no matter what the circumstances of the offence. In other words, the judicial officer has no discretion to impose a higher or lower sentence depending upon the nature of the crime.

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In 1988 the Australian Law Reform Commission identified two main criteria by which the community will judge the justice of the criminal justice system. "First, the criminal justice system must involve imposing on offenders punishments of sufficient severity that it is possible rationally to say that a breach of the law, when detected, is attended by significant consequences. Secondly, the system must be consistent in the apprehension, identification and punishment of offenders".

The need for consistency pervades all elements of the system. And my main gripe and criticism of the present criminal justice system is that it is inconsistent and very lenient. In other words the fundamental basis of sentencing "should be proportionate to the gravity of the offence or, to use the Mikado's words, "the punishment [should] fit the crime". And when this does not happen, the fear is that the 'suffering party' may take 'law' in its own hands to deliver justice irrespective of the consequences, a common practice seen in third world countries.

One case in point of the benefit of mandatory sentences: assaults against police officers dropped by 30% in the first year after the Liberal National Government in Western Australia introduced mandatory sentencing legislation in September last year. This very sort of legislation would send a clear message to the community that violent attack against 'soft targets' would no longer be tolerated. If this legislation was passed, then people would stop and think twice before assaulting innocent people. And another example: there is no 'graffiti' in Singapore. The reason is that there is mandatory imprisonment for any individual caught vandalising buildings and property with graffiti.

There is evidence to suggest that 'jailing children will just make them better criminals'. I say it is quite possible that they may come out better citizens having experienced the life in a jail.

I feel very comfortable in supporting such legislation!

Dr. Gurdip Aurora

President AISV

Annual Indian Independence Day Function

Where [Manningham City Council Function Centre](#)

699 Doncaster Road, Doncaster, VIC 3108

Phone: (03) 9840 9375

When Saturday, 20th August 2011

Cost \$65.00 non members

\$60.00 members

Time 6.30 pm sharp for 7.00pm start

To purchase your tickets please ring the committee members

(cost includes a three course meal and a cultural evening)



Dr. Manjula O'Connor
Vice President

Dr. Manjula writes about what the AISV, and others, are doing about Domestic Violence in the Indian community.

APPLIED/FORUM THEATRE

A NOVEL WAY OF EXPLORING THE PROBLEMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IN INDIAN HOMES

This project has been organized and run by Dr. Manjula O'Connor, Erminia Colucci, Karen Field and Xris Reardon.

The Indian Australian Community is a new and an emerging community and its contribution to Australian society is significant.

The Indian culture is more than 5000 years old. It has been and is a very successful culture and its people still hold on to traditional patterns of behaviors.

An Indian community participatory action project has been well received by the Indian community. The project was, initiated by the Australia India Society of Victoria and the Centre for International Mental Health (University of Melbourne), overseen by the Drummond street services, with a crucial role played by Third-way Theatre, to examine aspects of family life and harmony within the Australian Indian community. We were pleased to receive strong support from DISHA, (an Indian Ladies Philanthropic organization) and Western Punjabi Cultural Association (including Tarniet Gurdwara)

This project was a 3 phase process. In the first phase we used focus group discussions with the Indian women on the nature of harmonious family and what constitutes domestic violence in an Indian home, barriers to service use and optimal solutions.

1st Phase focus group discussions

The first step of the project involved community *Focus Group Discussions* held in four venues - Glen Waverly, Balwyn, Sunshine. We were pleased to receive strong support from the Indian ladies group DISHA and Tarniet Gurdwara. The topics of discussion were - the anatomy of a HAPPY Indian family; what does it look like when there is emotional abuse or physical violence or other forms of abuse of power and control within the home.

At the end of the focus group discussions women were asked if they would like to participate in theatre workshops, focused on using theatrical games and exercises, to further investigate and explore the themes above. The outcome of these workshops was to work with community members to create a short play that told the deepest truth of the community current thinking around Domestic Violence.

2nd Phase – Formation Of Theatre Pieces

The participants engaged in trust building exercises, played theatre games, as metaphors to talk about family disharmony, from their point of view and understandings. They made mime acts with some spoken lines that were then analyzed and broken down, looking at question of where, who, why and how? These techniques were used as a means to get inside and further understand the theme.

From the theatrical investigation and Focus Group Discussions , a script was devised that aimed at supporting an interactive dialogue with community audiences.

This was no ordinary theatre, as audiences played a vital role, and were encouraged by the Artistic Director Xris Reardon, to reflect and participate in dialogue, replace the protagonist on stage in order to find ways – together- to break the silence. This stage, formed one aspect of the evaluation of the project.

3rd Phase- Theatre performance

We performed theatre pieces at 3 venues Glen Waverley, Balwyn and Tarniet Gurudwara and Melbourne university.

We were delighted and grateful to have 6 actors, 5 drawn from the Indian community and one non-Indian woman. The project was supported by Penelope Glass, Co- founder of Teatro Pasmí from Chile, who collaborated with Third Way Theatre and Project Coordinators.

The theatre pieces were designed to encourage audiences to reflect on the performances that were usually mime with sparse dialogue, and then discuss what they saw, heard.

The audiences usually comprised Indian women mixed with Indian men and non-Indian audiences were asked to comment on scenarios. They used imagination, and interpretation of the scenes. A participatory dialogue between the stage and the audience ensued and was dynamic. The audience were asked what they read into the scene, identified various forms of domestic violence (enacted by the actors). Images had been created of Indian family life, depicting the nature of emotional, physical, financial abuse, control, coercion in an Indian family. The audience



reflected on the social drivers behind such violence. They explored the role of mothers, daughters-in-law and social pressures that enforce training of submission and silence in the face of domestic violence, what type of help they would want and what type of service they would use, why they were unable to engage with current services, barriers to current services. During some performances audience members replaced the main character on stage to get what they want. This created much merriment and excitement in the audience. There was a lot of fun as well as learning for the community, the audiences and the

research team.

The project partners are currently analysing the findings from the project which will allow us to plan for future events and to create better understanding and support for the Indian Australian community. The data are currently undergoing analysis by the Melbourne University's Dr. Erminia Colucci.

The Indian community engaged really well. The audiences actively participated in dialogue with the Artistic Director and Indian cultural consultant Dr. Manjula O'Connor.

The Indian Australian community is a new and emerging community; its contribution to Australian society is significant. The Indian culture is more than 5000 years old. It has been a very successful culture and people still hold on to traditional patterns of behaviors. While this gives a sense of stability and identity, many practices and social issues such as respectful relationships and human rights for women need attention by the community. The solutions to these new issues also rest within the energy and expertise of the community.



The aim of AISV is to facilitate transfer of knowledge and tools from the experts into the hands of the community leadership. Thus building community capacity to solve as well as prevent its own domestic violence problems.

Important contacts if you need help with domestic violence!

Family Relationship Advice Line
Intouch multi-cultural center
Drummond street services
Dr. Manjula O'Connor

Free call 1800 050 321
Free call 1800 755 988
(03) 9663 6733
0419 354 482 or manjulao@unimelb.edu.au.

Members....

Below is an email from Sash from the North Melbourne football club if you would like to help and have fun read on

Good morning everyone,

One of the points raised in the Community Ambassador meeting was the possibility of joining the NMFC Cheer Squad in making the banner for Round 17 match (Multicultural Round). We have spoken to the Cheer Squad about this, and they would be thrilled to have community members join them on 13 July. We have also arranged for one of our players to join the group on the night, and assist.

WHEN: Wednesday, 13 July 2011.

TIME: Arrive at 5.30pm, ends at 8.30pm.

WHERE: Flemington Racecourse, Epsom Road, Flemington.

It would be fantastic if some of you and members of your community could join the Cheer Squad to make the banner. Please note that places are limited, so please register your interest with Amanda Shepherd (amanda.shepherd@kangaroos.com.au or 9320 2471) by Monday 11 July. Following your registration, Amanda will send you further details about the Banner Night.

Also, just a quick reminder about other opportunities for your community to join us in celebrating the AFL Multicultural Round:

Tuesday 12 July,

Launch of the AFL Multicultural Round 11am-12pm- Football Clinic with senior NMFC players, Aegis Park, 204 Arden St, North Melbourne.

Sunday 17 July,

2pm - Football Match, Indigenous Academy vs. Multicultural Academy, Aegis Park, 204 Arden St, North Melbourne.

3.20pm- T-shirt giveaways, and Community walk to Etihad Stadium.

4.40pm- North Melbourne FC vs. Western Bulldogs.

Regards,
Sash

**SASH HERCEG | MANAGER COMMUNITY PROGRAMS-
THE HUDDLE
NORTH MELBOURNE FOOTBALL CLUB
Ph. (03) 9320 2476 | Mob. 0413 133 833 | Fax. (03) 9320
2401**

AGIS PARK

PO Box 158 North Melbourne VIC 3051
204-206 Arden St, North Melbourne VIC 3051
For further information about the club,
please visit: kangaroos.com.au

Australia India Society of Victoria Inc.

Membership Application/Renewal

(Please Print)

Title/s

Surname

First Name

Partner/Spouse's Name

Children

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Address (if address changed please provide your previous address below)

Post Code

Tel (B/H)

Tel: (A/H)

Mobile:

Email:

Other Details: (Hobbies, Interests)

Would you be interested to join the committee of AISV

Yes No

Membership Category (Circle one)

Life: \$300 Concession: \$20

Family: \$30 Single: \$20

Do you want a receipt Yes No

I hereby apply/renew membership of AISV in the above category. I am aware of the rules and regulations of the society.

Signature

Date : / /2011

Membership Application may be sent to:

The Secretary

Australia India Society of Victoria

P O Box 482

Brunswick VIC 3056

Australia

Change of Address:

Please complete the form with your new address and return to the AISV Secretary at above address, please indicate your previous address below to compare with the our record.

Australia India Society of Victoria is an integrated non-sectarian, Indian Association in Victoria. It represents Indians and Australians from many parts of the world. AISV membership is open to anyone who is interested in India, her culture and her people. The aims of AISV are to promote cultural and social events in context of India, safeguard interests of its members and to act as representatives for the Indian community in Victoria at various Federal, State and Local governmental levels.