

# *Hindu Council of Australia - HCA*

Hindu Council of Australia is a peak body organisation founded in 1998 with an aim to create a strong and unified Hindu community in Australia. Since HCA was founded, it has been acting as a representative of the Hindu community in Australia in dealing with the federal, state and local governments, apart from reaching out to other Hindu organisations and institutions

## *Mission of HCA*

Hindu Council of Australia's mission is to work for a strong, cohesive and active Hindu community in Australia, aiming to live in harmony with other religious and cultural communities while also devoted to preserving, promoting and sharing Hindu faith, culture and traditions with others in the society.

[hinducouncil.com.au](http://hinducouncil.com.au)



*Hindu Council of Australia*

# *Gargi Awards 2019*

*International Women's Day Celebration*

*"Honouring the Spirit of Women  
by appreciating women's achievement in  
various fields"*

Saturday 9th March 2019

@ Grevillea Room, Wentworthville Community Hub  
2, Lane Street, Wentworthville, NSW

## *Vision of HCA*

- Preserve, promote and share Hindu religious values and culture in Australia
- Unite Hindu faith, cultural organisations and groups in Australia
- Represent Hindu community in its dealings with Australian Federal, State and Local Government bodies
- Expand and strengthen links between Hindu organisations throughout Australia by creating effective communication and collaborative networking
- Advocate for the religious, cultural, social and educational needs of Hindus in Australia
- Celebrate religious and cultural festivals, exhibitions and programs
- Educate and support Hindu youth in all aspects of their growth and empowerment
- Promote harmony and understanding between Hindu and other faiths in Australia through inter-faith dialogue
- Provide information for understanding of Hindu traditions, culture, philosophy and theology in Australia.

## *Gargi Awards*



As part of International women's Day celebration Hindu Council of Australia started the Gargi Award in 2018 , to appreciate and honour Women's contribution and achievement in various fields. The award will consist of in various categories like Sports, Journalism, Performing arts, Defence, Community services, Carers, , Educationist, language and cultural etc.

The award is named after an ancient Indian philosopher considered to be the first woman philosopher Gargi Vachaknavi (7th century BCE). She is honored as a renowned expounder of the eternal knowledge in Vedic Literature. She participated in a philosophic debate and challenged the established male sage Yajnavalkya, the only lady to do so. She is also said to have written many hymns in the Rigveda

## PANEL OF EXTERNAL JUDGES

### Judith Friedlander



A journalist, academic and founder of FoodFaith, an organisation that fosters social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

One such initiative the 'SydneyB&B Highway', aims to bring birds and bees back to Sydney through

pollinating gardens and native stingless beehives.

With a background in newspapers, television and web media, Judy currently works as a postgraduate researcher at the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney.

- She is also completing her PhD and brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the sustainability space.

### Trish Keating



A retired Protocol Manager from the Cumberland Council, she is a member of the National Trust Australia, and the Parramatta Branch as well.

With her keen interest in the local history, culture & heritage, Trish is an active member of the Old Government House Friends Parramatta, and the Parramatta Heritage Society

- Dabbles in art (through the local art society) and is doing a Civil Marriage Celebrant Course.

## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

### Category : Defence Police Fire Emergency services

#### *Kamala (Nayni) Sharma-Wing, ACT*



- Kamala is an impressive young Naval officer and an active member of the Royal Australian Navy's intercultural Diversity Reference group
- Works to see genuine diversity and inclusion reflected within the Defence, Nayni has been a positive influence at the workplace.
- Collected more than 5 tons of quality items and medicines, opened doors within Nepal to distribute the donated goods in a timely manner.
- Her contribution to the reference groups has shaped policies to assist Navy become a more diverse and inclusive organisation where people from differing cultures, all faiths can work cooperatively and respectfully together.



#### *Davita Pathi, SA*

An intellectual property lawyer and trade mark attorney with 10 years' experience, with the last 7 being in the Defence Science and Technology group.

- Despite DST being a heavily dominated male industry with less than 5% representation of women in senior leadership roles, is the Director of the Technology Partnerships Office.
- As the only director under the age of 40 in her division, she spearheads research and development collaborations for DST
- She also taught taekwondo to juniors at Uni as a form of discipline. She has campaigned for equal opportunities for leadership training, onsite child care and onsite pram car parks to provide a better avenue at work for women.

## Category : Journalism



### *Harita Mehta, NSW*

A hardworking individual who has received numerous accolades from Indian and international organizations, and an active volunteer at Illawarra Multicultural Services.

- She has helped refugees kick start their small businesses, and trains small groups on soft skill. Harita also runs an NGO in India, the Harita Kala Vrund to help women be self-reliant.
- She is a person with can do attitude and never lose hope, propagating the same through her profound articles on sensitive issues like domestic violence against male and female in Indian diaspora in Australia

### *Gajalakshmi Paramasivam, NSW*

Upholds diversity and equal opportunity through the publishing channel (Naan Australia; Jaffna is my Heritage, not my dowry)



- Continues to fight odds against racial discrimination, rising above the complacency attitude and caste barriers to epitomize and uphold values that Gajalakshmi holds dear.
- Ø She goes by the belief 'we have done our best and sacrificed as much as we can for the common good' to be where we are

## Category : Language & Culture



### *Gargi Bhattacharya, ACT*

A Bengali author with 59 books under her kitty, she has showcased the ability to write deep thoughts concisely.

- Gargi is also known for innovative ideas, was the founder and editor of one of the pioneer online Bengali webzines – Conjure. Single handedly running it for 100 consecutive months, she encouraged many budding writers and poets to flourish through her magazine.
- Despite battling severe health issues, her creative flare has not dimmed, nor her zest for the Bengali community deterred.

### *Dr. Chandrika Subramaniyan, NSW*

A multi-faceted personality, who is a key contributor in the field of education since 1988 across organizations in Australia and the south-east Asian countries.



- Also, Dr. Chandrika is a renowned media and judicial consultant and advisor
- She is a seasoned educator, mentor and motivator of sub-continent community especially for the Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils.
- A highly commended person in the field of education and cultural development, recipient of numerous accolades by governments, organizations and institutions.

## Category : Language & Cultural



*Margaret Sebastin, NSW*

An active leader in the community since 2005, recognized widely for her contribution. Margaret enjoys organising community events, fund raisers and is a pillar of support to the lesser fortunate amongst us. She is especially a beacon for the asylum seekers and refugees.

- Does commendable work with young adults to help them master public speaking and professional communication.
- She assists in soup kitchens and blood donations frequently, despite juggling a busy life.

## Category : Performing Arts

*Mittu Gopalan, NSW*

A successful lawyer, managing a business and legal firm (Freedman and Gopalan). Mittu finds time for her passion, the arts taking pride for pursuing it, and helping the community all the way. Conducted a painting exhibition in November 2017 at Sydney.



## Category : Community Service



*Rani Sundar Subbaram, NSW*

A multifaceted person who is a nurse and member of Western Sydney Diabetes leaders alliance. Despite being a full-time para medical professional and raising a young family, she has been an active member of the community.

- Rani inculcates and imparts our cultural practices and values to the impressionable minds at our public schools.
- Recipient of Lions Club accolades, her work to the local area health division is tremendous.

*Jaya Pathi, SA*

As the youngest of eight children, pursuing medicine seemed a far-fetched, sheer hard work and perseverance helped her achieve it. The same grit and determination led her to juggle work and family during her early years of migrating to Australia.

- Jaya supports charities for animal rights and protection of the environment, along with her long-standing commitment of serving the community through medicine.
- aya has been recognized for the 50 years of medical care and service to the community.
- Also, she espouses the ethos of gender equality, kindness and treating all with respect.





## Category : Community Service



### *Manju Jain Verma, NSW*

A scientist, academic and clinician, Dr. Manju has earned her PhD in Ocular immunology from UNSW whilst being a specialist in ophthalmology.

- Abandoning a promising academic career at home, bringing up children, clearing the 14 exams to be allowed to practice, financial constraints, having to leave behind the young family (travelling overseas for community work), Dr. Verma has been able to tackle all the curve balls life has thrown at her.
- Undertaken numerous ophthalmology projects in India since 1997. Currently building a charitable eye hospital in Bhagpat, 35km from the capital city Delhi.

### *Esha Oberoi, NSW*

This young and vibrant business woman started Afea Care Services in 2008 to change the way home care is delivered to the vulnerable in the community.

Today Afea supports over 500 families through nearly 350 carers & nurses, including 40 full time staff to run the business.



Using her own adverse personal experiences, overtime Esha was able to develop the business, including setting up a credible Advisory Board to guide her through the journey. Competing against the large traditional Not for Profit organisations, Esha worked hard and diligently to build the trust amongst the clientele, her brand and the business.

### *Sanjila Verma, ACT*

Her passion to assist and participate in community wellbeing has seen Sanjila help the elderly of our community in as many ways and means as possible including fund raisers, donation drives and holiday support.



- Sheer hard work and a great sense of duty and compassion helped her break the glass ceiling to become a Regional General manager
- Her leadership style, strategizing and vision development is an inspiration to the young professionals of our community
- Sanjila has won acclamations at work in the health care industry as well as the respect of the community