

# 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 Function 2020*

Honouring the Spirit of Women

*"Honouring the spirit of Women by  
appreciating women's achievements in  
various fields"*

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021  
Madison Function Centre  
632 Old Northern Road, Dural, NSW 2158

## 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 a part of International Women's Day celebration Hindu Council of Australia started the Gargi Award in 2018, to appreciate and honor Women's contribution and achievement in various fields. The award will consist of various categories like Sports, Journalism, Performing arts, Police and Defence service, Community services, Educationist, Science and Research , Arts 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

### *Susan Wakefield*

- Awarded the OAM and Jean Harris award for her services to the Girl Guide movement, Susan is a senior Girl Guide Leader who has been part of the movement for over 35 years. Since 2007, Susan is part of the rotary club of Lower Blue mountains, playing various club and district level roles at Rotary International.
- In her business life she has been a Plainclothes Policewoman, Department manager in a retail Store and the Financial Officer for a Foster care organization. Susan enjoys international travel and has undertaken numerous trips as a part of Girl Guides and Rotary.
- Susan and her husband John are Major Donors of the Rotary Foundation and Bequest members. They have enjoyed a long and happy marriage and their son, daughter in law and three grandsons live in Norway.



### *Rosalie Fishman, BA, MCom., AM, AFD, APT*

- A highly skilled educator and management consultant, Rosalie's background in academia (UTS and AGSM), includes research (in culture, organizational learning and change management) teaching (post graduate and executive programs) and consulting across a range of organizations.
- Rosalie has a special interest in diversity and sees the need to build 'inclusiveness in culture' across differences both within and between groups. She is engaged as a management consultant with 8Hotels Boutique Co. and uses her expertise in a volunteer capacity for non-for-profit organizations, currently serving as a key worker for UIA Women's division and on the Community Relations Committee at the NSWJBD.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

Category : Arts

### *Pratibha Bhanushali, NSW*

- Juggles different hats, including running a successful business, running a P&C, and supporting various Community Services and Organisations.
- Pratibha has been actively raising funds for charities and volunteering her team towards community service.
- Despite her busy work and personal life, Pratibha finds the time and heads initiatives to support the wider community unconditionally and selflessly.



### *Kavitha Jayakumar, NSW*

- A passionate emigrant crossed the hurdles of settling down, adapting to a new country and easing into work, to start an Art School in 2016 with just a handful of students.
- Today KJS has about 100 students from 4 to 80 years at its 2 branches. At a point, there were more than 200 students enrolled. Kavitha's work is always unique and colourful, reflecting her identity and beliefs.
- Over the years, KJS has become a backbone of the community, supporting Cumberland council for its Tree planting day event, Harman foundation for its health and well-being forum, and Sydwest Multicultural for Art therapy.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

Category : Community Service

### *Harinder Kaur, NSW*

- Founder of the Harman Foundation, established Women's refuge, providing grief & loss and chaplaincy services at Prisons and Hospitals, serving more than 1000 patients.
- Between a full time job and household, Harinder volunteers for more than 45 hours every week, as the wellbeing and needs of others are her utmost priority.
- Harinder overcame the grief of her beloved son's tragic passing away in 2012, by setting up Harman Foundation to reach out to the vulnerable and disadvantaged women and children of our community.



### *Anita Ravi Upadhye, NSW*

- A committed BAPS volunteer, Anita religiously manages the various events at the mandir and in the community. Devoting time to the welfare of the mandir and the community, Anita spearheads mandir functions, along with her volunteers, who are inspired by her zeal to serve.
- Echoing the words "Those Who Pray Together, Stay Together", she encourages our youth to be the part of prayer meets. Despite juggling a demanding Clinical Technician job and the family, Anita contributes all her spare time to the Seva of the Sants and the Mandir.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

### *Bhumika Mayur Mhatre, NSW*

- A vibrant individual who is committed to bring the Marathi community in Australia together, through events, inspirational activities and organising various religious programs to make the community feel at home.
- Bhumika has made a difference in the life of emigrants, organising meetups, baby showers and creating social platforms to unite as a community.
- Bhumika is working towards her vision to build the first ever Maharashtrian Temple here in Australia with the support of the Marathi diaspora.



### *Dr Sabrin Farooqui, NSW*

- From her experience of landing on the shores of Australia in 2004, Dr Sabrin Farooqui reaches out to migrants and refugees in settlement programs, including the vulnerable and destitute, to offer practical assistance support their independence, self-esteem and self-reliance.
- Sabrin has arranged workshops and training on financial literacy, understanding the job market, it's gaps, CV preparation and workshops, mock interviews, social and interactive skills for migrant and refugee women.
- Not only does Dr Farooqui work closely with the Rohingya community in Australia, but she also tirelessly works on bringing about policy changes, helps immigrants assimilate into Australian way of life.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

### Category : Community Service

#### *Indu Harikrishna, NSW*

- Plays a key role in coordinating with the multiple member and non-member associations to support the motto #Togetherwesupport of UIA. Encouraged participation of varied cultural groups highlighting India's multiculturalism and streamlined events to meet best Community standards time and again.
- Indu has ably spearheaded the management of social media and organised varied events for emigrants through Job Search Opportunities, Sponsors Promotional activities, Coordination of Volunteers for the UIA.
- She achieves the humongous task of collaborating and coordinating with the 32 member associations for all UIA activities through her capability and charm. From promotion to execution, the Mateship Fair showcasing more than 300 performers is a case in point.



#### *Dr Rugmini Venkataraman, NSW*

- As a trained Sociologist has been working in academic and community development sectors, across India and Australia for the last 35 years.
- Rugmini is a certified trainer, who coaches community workers, TAFE students and community leaders on varied topics from parenting, leadership and governance to domestic violence and CaLD issues.
- Rugmini was responsible to set up the Toongabbie Legal Centre and is a role model to the community through her selfless work and her personality. She has been a guiding force to many organisations, especially in women empowerment and is an office bearer at Pink Sari.
- A selfless volunteer and strong advocate of women works ceaselessly with a smile on her face despite the many personal challenges.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

#### *Maryam Popal Zahid, NSW*

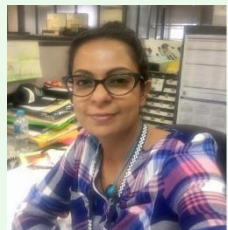
- The Founder Director of Afghan Women on the Move, a Peace Ambassador with International Women's peace group and the Chair of Domestic Violence Prevention at Sydwest Multicultural Services. As a bi-lingual health educator at NSW Refugee Health and casual voice dabbler at SBS Australia, Maryam has come a long way from the 15-year-old who fled war torn Afghanistan.
- Though the personal challenges were innumerable, Maryam finds the time to help other women in need, nothing coming in the way of pursuing her passion. Maryam's work focuses on gender equality, women's right and the displacement of the Afghan diaspora around the world.
- Maryam is dedicated to empowering women and ensuring that they are recognised and valued for the care and love they provide their families and communities. She believes that stronger families lead to stronger communities.



### Category : Defence, Police, Fire, emergency services

#### *Rachna Soni, NSW*

- One of the first women of Indian origin to become a Multicultural Police Officer in Australia. Though considered a daunting task to join the police force, the driven and talented Rachna took on this role in her stride.
- Rachna engages with the community through dialogue, patience, perseverance and most importantly care and consideration, especially for victims of Domestic Violence. She is instrumental in bringing cultural sensitivity to the police force and creating the right engagement at major community events.
- Has proactively forged a channel between the Indian diaspora and the NSW police to connect, understand, and resolve issues, thereby creating positive relationships.





## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

Category : Journalism / Education

*Jeanie Wood, NSW*

- A private music teacher for over 40 years with hundreds of students under her tutelage. First novel published at 69 years, celebrating friendship between older women from a multitude of backgrounds.
- Jeanie led the 1st/2nd Merrylands scout Group, inspiring them to care for each other, achieving to their abilities and growing into well-rounded young adults. Encouraged learning and confidence through the medium of theatre, through the Cumberland Gang Show for over 30 years.
- She volunteers at the Merrylands Anglican Church, to help people from all over the world improve their English and find their place in the Australian community.



Category : Sports

*Clare Stockdale, NSW*

- Clare has been very active in Sports all through her life, right from school proving that age is just a number. A true inspiration of what is possible can be garnered from the numerous titles won by Clare throughout her young age.
- The .22 girls' rifle shooting title, representing the on the award-winning girls' precision (marching) squad were just some of the feathers on her hat. Clare did tennis and archery, basketball team, which she started, and was part of synchronized swimming.
- One of the first squash players in England and later in Australia, she started a women's team in Mosman to continue playing an active role in Squash.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

Category : Education

*Neha Takale, NSW*

- Neha has been the backbone of setting up the Marathi School in 2006, right from its initiation, planning, set up, curriculum planning, teacher training to syllabus updates, assessments and continuous improvements.
- Australian Marathi Vidyalaya has been represented on different community programs and varied platforms such as the community radio programs, through Neha's untiring efforts.
- She has been actively inculcating promoting the Maharashtrian culture and traditions through various activities and events for the past decade here in Australia.



*Dr Rajeswari Chelliah Senathiraj, WA*

- As an Indian teaching English, Rajeswari faced various challenges, including racial discrimination in her pursuit to educate others. Despite the many cultural differences, as a new migrant 30 years ago, she had adapted to living in a new country and integrated seamlessly into the society.
- Rajeswari mentors women in the community on their educational and career choices. She inspires the younger generation to emulate her sense of perseverance, commitment and strong roots to tradition and values.
- Dr Senathirajah volunteers her time to give back to the community as a charter member of the Rotary Club, whilst maintaining work life balance.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

### Category : Education

#### *Felicity Kean, NSW*

- Harding Miller Education Foundation's longest standing and most dedicated volunteer, working tirelessly over the past five years as a personal coach and student support to hundreds of young girls from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds.
- A public advocate and ambassador for the HMEF program, Felicity successfully recruited many coaches and volunteers to increase the service and enable the cause of gender equality.
- Felicity coached HMEF's first cohort of scholarship recipients from 2016. It was no small task to look after 100, 14-15-year-old girls across NSW. It required an unlimited and unconditional commitment to every scholar, their families and to the mission of HMEF. She had to constantly keep in touch, research into each girl and think of ways to assist them – the boundless mental and physical capacity it needed.
- Felicity is a bubble of energy, vitality, warmth and generosity. For the first group of 68 graduates from 2019, it was her kindness and dedication to equal rights for all, that enabled these young women to beat the odds and flourish.



### Category : Performer

#### *Seema Gowda, NSW*

- An initiative, meticulous and creative person brings forth fellow ladies from across Sydney for the annual Ganeshotsava Dance. Seema juggles a multitude of hats with ease to create and nurture a healthy environment for the annual event.
- Seema's dedication and enterprise are evident in her initiatives of introducing Aerobics and tournaments for the physical and mental wellbeing of the community.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

#### *Nikhila Kiran, NSW*

- A catalyst of the local Bharatanatyam community, serving Sydney through her school Natyanivedan for over 22 years. Trained over 130 students and choreographed over 100 stage performances.
- Guru Nikhila's classes not only involve Bharatanatyam lessons, but teaches time management, meditation, contribution to the society. She provides her students with a multitude of stage performance opportunities and facilitates dance workshops to further skills.
- Natyanivedan has been a gateway to Indian cultural roots and provides a platform to nurture the multifaceted art of Bharatanatyam.



#### *Ira Harshraj Patkar, ACT*

- Revived and promoted Indian classical dance not just within the Canberra Hindu diaspora, but also broader Australian community thru the Kathak school Mudrakar. Performs in community events to give back to the community.
- Ira is a talented writer and translator, an accomplished Radio broadcaster and producer on Canberra Multicultural Service radio 91.1 FM. She manages the Radio's social media, website and helps in publishing a weekly community e-newsletter highlighting upcoming community events and information on Government programs relating to culturally and linguistically diverse groups.
- A multifaceted personality, who juggles work, family, passion and still takes the time to volunteer and support the local community.

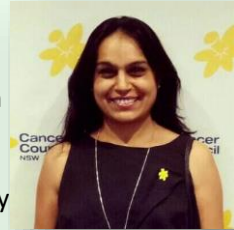


## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

### Category : Performer

#### *Kanan Shah, NSW*

- Runs the dance school NIPA, Nartan Institute of Performing Arts for over 8 years, training more than 700 students of all ages and abilities. Completed more than 500 performances in Sydney since its inception, with 141 performances across community events just in 2019.
- Kanan's amazing work ethic, her infectious energy inspires her students and the people around her. She has supported numerous community events and contributed to the various programs through her patience and perseverance.
- Kanan has made a significant difference to multiculturalism in Australia, exemplifying the diverse heritage of India to the wider community in Australia. So much so that the slokas she teaches in her dances-the girls are found to recite while practicing and performing.



#### *Manjula Vishwanath, NSW*

- Since 2007, Manjula has entwined her passions art and charity to use Bharatanatyam as a platform to support numerous organizations. Through Manjula's evocative rendition, Bharatanatyam has crossed international boundaries and touched the chords of dignitaries and art enthusiasts alike. She has 1000 solo performances to her credit, is on the ICCR Panel and a Doordarshan Kendra A graded Artist.
- Manjula pioneered a movement, a socially significant and potent experience that developed movement vocabulary and skills in contact improvisation and modern dance based on audience feedback over the years.
- Today the school boasts about 250 students at 3 locations. Manjula and her team have performed and taught locally, nationally and internationally, in a wide variety of venues and situations.



## FINAL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

### Category : Science and Research

#### *Nandini Shankara Narayana, NSW*

- A specialist Endocrinologist, who recently completed a PhD in Andrology, with several notable research papers to her name. Nandini is one of the very few woman clinicians in Andrology (male reproductive health), having to move continents chasing the dream.
- Dr. Nandini's major work has been on the effects of non- prescribed testosterone use in body builders on male reproductive and cardiac functions. She is currently working to establish a genetic hypogonadism register in Australia, a first of its kind, through research grant (Ferring Award, ESA)



#### *Anna Sokolova, NSW*

- A distinguished scientist and physicist working at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. Anna's expertise is wide, ranging from the designing scientific instrumentation, to conducting complex experiments with global teams on the machine Bilby. She has authored 30 scientific publications, chaired the scientific & technical advisory panel since 2020
- As a member of the AINSE Materials Science and Engineering Committee, Anna assess applicants to reward students their PhDs. As a part of ANSTO's Women in STEM program, works with schoolgirls to showcase Science. When an opportunity comes, Anna believes it is rudimentary to perform at your best and inspire people around you.



#### *Dr Garima Sharma, NSW*

- Dr. Garima is the first overseas trained woman Dentist of Indian origin to successfully complete her Doctor of Clinical Dentistry as an Endodontist.
- Garima taught, trained, encouraged and supervised budding undergraduate students at University of Adelaide. She motivated and supported fellow registrars to successfully complete their research in a timely fashion.
- Dr. Garima Sharma is a passionate clinician, who enjoys her Dentistry and is committed to on-going learning, spreading knowledge and experiences.

