

FINACT

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21

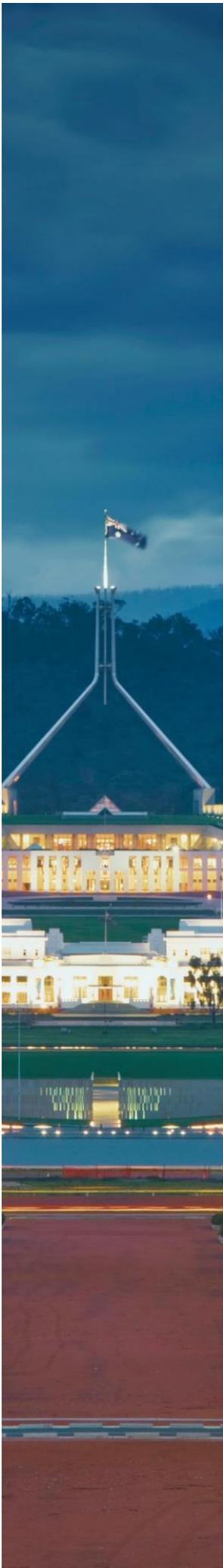
AGM - 25 JUL

PLEASE JOIN US!



Federation of Indian Associations of ACT Inc acknowledges

the traditional custodians of Canberra and surrounding areas,
the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their
continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of
this city and this region.



OUR PROFILE

The Federation of Indian Association of ACT Inc (FINACT) was officially launched on 31 July 2011 and that makes it 10 years old.

The unified voice and inclusive approach of FINACT is reflected in its slogan: Coordination::Cooperation::Collaboration. FINACT develops and nurtures productive working relationship with government and non-government stakeholders and other key community service organisations in the ACT community.

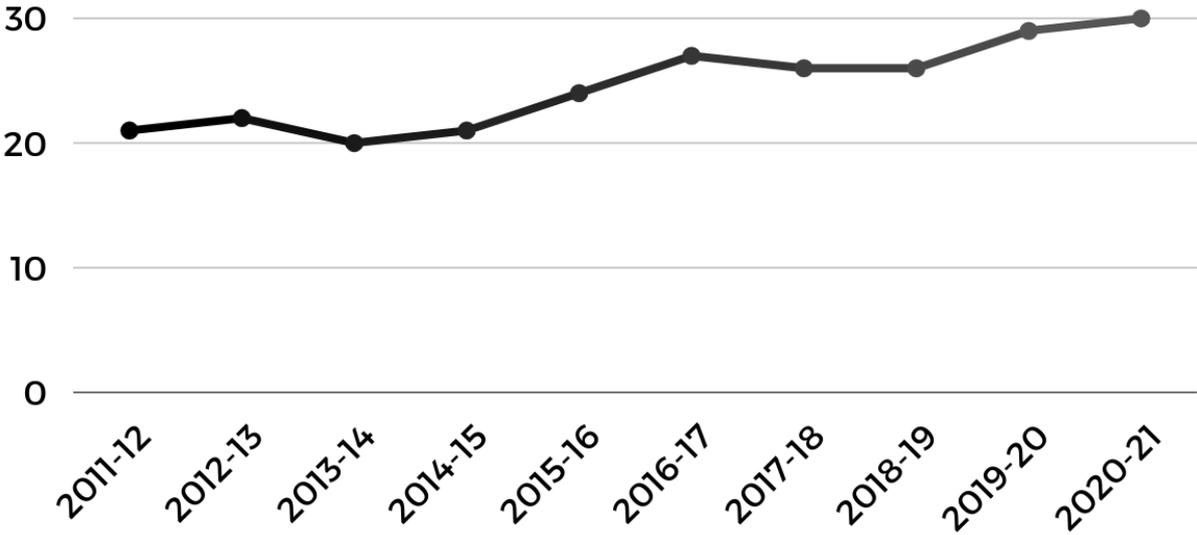
OUR OBJECTIVES

FINACT provides a unified voice for all its member associations, majority of the Indian Australians and the people of Indian origin in the Canberra region.

It promotes advancement and integration of the Indian Australians as responsible citizens of the broader Australian society; and strengthening of social cohesiveness, shared values, mutual respect and harmony in the Australian society through increased participation in policy making, sports, cultural, social, and recreational activities, and in government initiatives.

OUR MEMBERS

FINACT welcomes all Indian associations to be a part of this federation and contribute to efforts to achieve our shared goal. Steadily increasing number of associations is a testimony to our honest endeavours.



FINACT Team 2020-21





FINACT TEAM 2020-21

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Dr Sunita S Dhindsa | President |
| Mr Chitti Babu Divi | Vice-President |
| Dr Ajmal PN | Secretary |
| Mrs Ragini Santhanam | Treasurer |
| Mr Ashwin Padmanabhan | Rep (Youth) |
| Mr Sarwin D'Souza | Rep (Youth) |
| Mrs Sahithi Paturi | Rep (Women) |
| Mrs Sejal Patel | Coord (Comm Ser.) |
| Mrs Shahira Shaji | Coord (Cult Prog) |
| Mr Ravi Krish | Public Officer |
| Mr Rattesh Gumber | AusIndia Fair Coord |

OUR AMBITION & INTENT

FINACT values and stands for

- **F**raternity
- **I**nclusiveness
- **N**etworking
- **A**ssistance
- **C**ooperation
- **T**eamwork.

FINACT works for and with its member organisations. Whilst the Executive Committee is the coordinating body which is elected annually and given responsibility to perform tasks by the General Council, it reflects the views and issues raised by members.

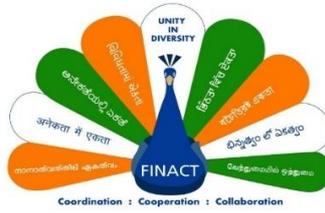
MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

- ACT Telangana Association
 - Australian Anglo-Indian Association of Canberra
 - Australian Tamil Society of ACT
 - Bengali Cultural Association of Canberra
 - Bihar Jharkhand Sabha of Australia & New Zealand
 - Canberra Hindu Mandir
 - Canberra Jain Mandal
 - Canberra Malayalee Association (CMA)
 - Canberra Punjabi Sports & Cultural Association (CPSCA)
 - Canberra Sikh Association (CSA)
 - Canberra Telugu League
 - Gujarati Samaj of ACT
 - India Australia Multicultural Sports Association
 - Indian Australian Association of Health and Well-being
 - Indian Students Association
 - Initiatives for Women in Needs
 - Integrated Cultures ACT
 - Indian Senior Citizens Association
 - Indian Students Association
 - Karnataka Association of Canberra
 - Madhya Pradesh Association of Australia
 - Mandir School of Music
 - Mehak Punjab Di
 - Navya Andhra Telugu Association
 - Oriya Association (OriOz)
 - Pink Umbrella Inc
 - Rajasthan Sabha of Australia and New Zealand
 - Rajdhani Marathi Mandal Canberra
 - Sprintz Inc
 - Telugu Association of Canberra
 - UC Indian Association (UCIA)
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Acknowledgements

FINACT thanks the following for their help with community matters:

Elected Representatives

Federal

Sen. Katy Gallagher

Hon Alex Hawke MP

Ms Alicia Payne MP

Sen. Zed Seselja

Mr David Smith MP

Australian Capital Territory

Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Chief Minister of ACT

Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

Ms Leanne Castley MLA

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA

Mrs Giulia Jones MLA

Ms Elizabeth Kikkert MLA

Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA

Mr James Milligan MLA

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA

Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA

Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

High Commission of India Canberra

HE Mr Manpreet Vohra, High Commissioner of India Canberra

HE Mr A Gitesh Sarma, High Commissioner of India Canberra

Mr P.S. Karthigeyan, Deputy High Commissioner of India Canberra

ACT/Federal Government Delegates

Ms Christine Murray, Executive Group Manager ACT Community Services Directorate

Ms Azra Khan, Senior Director ACT Multicultural Festival

Ms Jenny Wells, Director ACT Community Services Directorate

Ms Naheed Hafiz, Community Engagement Officer Department of Home Affairs

FINACT Members

Mr Sanjay Pandey for supporting with the social media and newsletters

Dr Harjinder Dhindsa for helping with logistics for FINACT events

President's Message

Our expectations to return to pre-COVID times did not materialize. Mutating strains of COVID-19 are causing pandemics in many nations. Also, parts of Australia were impacted by bushfires and floods. Our thoughts and sympathies are with those who have lost their loved ones and are suffering hardships.

We express our sincere appreciation of the work done by the Australian federal/state/territory governments, the health professionals and all involved in keeping Australians and economy safe from ravages of COVID19.

Vision and emerging tasks

I am sure I reflect the views of the community that we are fortunate to be living in Australia, and more so to be in Canberra. There is much to be grateful for, but a society only advances when people are educated, aware, active and vocal. New challenges for society and governments are arising with changing demographics and digital/social lifestyle. With this in mind, I feel it is a key responsibility that as community leaders we:

- Actively and constructively engage with the government to provide proper advice where called for
- Collaborate with relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure that voices of communities are heard and reflected in the decisions.

It is also becoming essential that governments consider:

- Development and provision of culturally respectful aged care facilities for both home based and aged care homes
- Finding meaningful ways of engaging children and youth in the society to help them become better citizens of our multicultural society
- More support to families to enable parents to look after their and family health
- Greater meaningful consultation by government with communities to ensure that changes/initiatives meet community expectations
- Self-sufficiency, particularly highlighted due to COVID restrictions, at least in the manufacture of essential commodities.

We thank the ACT government for building the new crematorium to meet multicultural needs of the community. The election commitment to build a large sized community hall is welcome. We believe greater benefit would come if the government considered a larger capacity multicultural centre. FINACT has been lobbying for it for many years.

We value and continue to strengthen productive relationships with the government and non-government sector. We value our Canberra community and continue to work for:

- greater integration and social cohesiveness in the society
- culturally respectful community facilities for multicultural needs of our society
- responsiveness to community issues and concerns.

Some key initiatives and activities

It has been a busy year for FINACT. There have been several key initiatives and activities during the year and many of these had a positive impact on the diaspora:



- Broad-scoped COVID related activities
- Domestic and Family Violence services to the community
- FINACT Webinar series commencing with COVID, vaccinations and health
- Correspondence related to policy, media and other community matters
- Greater consultation/engagement with stakeholders and lobbying of authorities
- Accreditation of Malayalee and Gujarati languages
- Cultural activities and celebrations of various festivals by constituent members
- FINACT Harmony Day celebration
- Recognition of several members of the community as recipients of awards and honours and who have made us all proud
- Welcome to the new High Commissioner of India to Australia HE Mr Manpreet Vohra and Mrs Naseem Vohra and farewell to HE Mr Gitesh Sarma and Mrs Ratnamala Sarma.

Our Members, Executives and Thanks

We welcome the Pink Umbrella Inc to the FINACT family.

Our success and our reputation come from the strength and work of our Constituent Members and the Executive Committee they elect. I want to thank our 30 members for their trust, support, cooperation and engagement. I pay my respect to past Presidents for steering FINACT strategically. I feel privileged to serve FINACT as its President.

I had the pleasure of working with a formidable and gender balanced Executive Committee that has helped position FINACT strategically for collective representation. I thank their families for their support. I would like to thank the FINACT Team: Mr Chittibabu Divi, Dr Ajmal PN, Mrs Ragini Santhanam, Mrs Shahijra Karattiyattil, Mrs Sahithi Paturi, Mrs Sejal Patel, Mr Sarwin D'Souza, Mr Ashwin Padmanabhan, Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy, Dr Krishna Nadimpalli, and Mr Rattesh Gumber. Thanks to Mr Sanjay Pandey and Dr Harjinder Dhindsa for their support to the FINACT Team.

I thank the volunteers who helped establish greater appreciation of our ethos and rich history. It has been a privilege to lead the representative body of a 15,000 strong diaspora and an honour to work with the various stakeholders and the communities for the betterment of our society as a whole.

With contributions by well-wishers and the members, FINACT continues to be a crucial, relevant and a meaningful leader. We have been able to make significant gains and achievements in many areas that matter to our communities and our society. A lot of invisible coordination and behind the scenes work occurs to make things happen.

Through this report, I briefly share the work of the Executive Committee and members that demonstrates FINACT's efforts to forge partnerships and connections, promote FINACT values and achievement of its goals, and provision of respectful and responsive collective representation and leadership.

On behalf of the 30 constituent members and the outgoing Executive Committee, I wish everyone unhindered, prosperous, productive and healthy times ahead. May we continue to work for the well-being of our beloved country Australia, Australian multicultural society and create stronger bonds between Australia and India.

Sunita S Dhindsa
President

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world. “ - Joel A. Barker

FINACT ACTIVITIES

A. Strategic Issues

1. Domestic and Family Violence Services

FINACT has been contacted/requested to support communities to deal with the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) issue. All genders of all ages are exposed to DFV issues. This matter was discussed at the GCM on 21 February 2021 and the Council gave in-principle approval. Detailed proposal was considered at the GCM on 20 May 2021 and approval was given to form an interim sub-committee to start the process. Feedback was sought from members on the drafted selection criteria for forming the sub-committee. Pursuant to the consultation, the FINACT Executive Committee nominated Dr Sunita S Dhindsa as the interim Coordinator.

Services to include:

- Facilitate prevention by creating awareness about DFV in a healthy way
- Be a focal point for communities for domestic and family violence resources
- Network with authorities and service providers to ensure that services/resources are culturally relevant to the communities
- Facilitate access to the resources by working with service providers.

2. Languages Accreditation

Since 2014-15, FINACT has worked to get major Indian community languages accredited through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). As part of this process FINACT delegates led by Dr Krishna Nadimpalli worked with community organisations and individuals, with support from Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, former Minister of Multicultural Affairs (2015) and Senator Zed Seselja, Minister for Multicultural Affairs (2017) and NAATI executives resulting in accreditation of Bengali and Telugu languages. In 2021, Malayalam and Gujarati languages received accreditation for translation and interpretation services. We appreciate consideration of FINACT's request by NAATI. Congratulations to the associations, communities and all those involved in this goal. Several other languages are under consideration. Let us continue the good work together.



3. India Centre

Aim number five given in the FINACT Constitution is ‘**To establish, develop and maintain an “India Centre” – a Community and Resource centre in ACT for use and benefit of member organisations and the community**’.

A sub-committee has been approved by the Council to progress the work on India Centre. Dr Krishna Nadimpalli is leading the development of a proposal to progress the centre.

4. Letter to the ACT Chief Minister on the “Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practice Bill 2020”

FINACT wrote to the Hon Chief Minister about the proposed “Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practice Bill 2020” and raised concerns and sought clarification regarding parental rights.

FINACT made the following recommendations:

- Conversion should not be done before the age of 18 years of the recipient; and
- In exceptional circumstances where it is proven that earlier intervention (before the age of 18 years) is the only solution for the physical, emotional and mental health of the child, intervention to occur only in consultation with qualified and legitimate professionals, with consent of the recipient and parents/guardians; and
- Any kind of conversion should be performed by qualified and legitimate professionals; and
- Parents/guardians should be able to guide, protect and care for their child without fear of being penalised.

FINACT received a call from the Advisor at the Chief Minister’s office to discuss our concerns. The letter was going to be forwarded to the ACT Attorney General for further consideration.

5. Letter to the Acting Minister for Immigration Hon Alan Tudge re visa issues

FINACT wrote to the Acting Minister for Immigration, Hon Alan Tudge to raise the following issues and made recommendations. Response from Minister’s office is included under each issue.

Allow overseas travel to see critically unwell loved ones

Recommendation: Permit overseas travel to individuals to see their critically ill loved ones, subject to necessary documentation and fulfillment of conditions for returning to Australia.

Response: The Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Department of Home Affairs have made it easier to submit and track travel exemption requests with a new purpose-built service delivery platform, available at <https://travel-exemptions.homeaffairs.gov.au/tep>. The Department and the ABF are finalising the majority of inwards travel exemption requests within 7 days, noting that some complex requests may take longer. These measures are temporary and are reviewed regularly. Further information on travel exemptions is available on the Home Affairs website <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

Give temporary visa priority on compassionate grounds for widowed parent

Recommendation: Provide temporary visa priority on compassionate grounds for widowed parent with their child/children residing in Australia, subject to meeting the quarantine requirements.

Response: Inward travel restrictions do not apply to Australian citizens, permanent residents, immediate family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents, and certain other categories of people.

Review requirement to go offshore for visa and/or extension of visa during COVID-restrictions

Recommendation: While COVID-restrictions are in place, this requirement should be waived.

Response: Requirement to go offshore for partner and contributory parent visa has been waived, temporarily.

Review high cost for getting long term temporary visa

Recommendation: Long term temporary visa costs should be reduced.

Response: Information given with example of partner visa, no information on parent visa.

6. International Students, 485 Visa Holders

FINACT has been lobbying government through writing to the Minister for Immigration to consider concerns of 485 visa holders, international students and temporary migrants. International students paid fee and obtained visa to study on campus, have work experience in Australia, and network with other international students and members of the Australian society. This objective is not being met.

FINACT submitted a written request to the Minister and requested for their visa extensions and provided a few possible options. The response from Minister's office acknowledged that that they are important for the country and consideration will be given in due course.

B. Consultations/Meetings/Lobbying

Due to the special challenges of 2020-21, there was greater engagement and consultation with stakeholders and lobbying of relevant authorities. This helped FINACT to support the government, communities and groups; represent the communities; and raise their issues. We also communicated with relevant elected representatives (federal/ACT) and engaged with media to raise awareness of and to solve community issues, with some success.

1. Stakeholder Consultations

Meetings organised to discuss about community matters and FINACT projects:

- High Commissioners of India to Australia and more recently His Excellency Mr Manpreet Vohra
 - Hon Senator Zed Seselja
 - Hon Senator Katy Gallagher
 - Minister Shane Rattenbury MLA and Mr Andrew Braddock MLA
- Discussed about the issue of reducing voting age and need for extensive public consulting; need for multicultural community facility managed by community and in family safe precinct; lack of adequate community consultation on the 'Sexuality and Gender Identity Conversion Practice Bill'. We also discussed on how community consultation can be made more effective. FINACT also raised the scope of "family" to be broadened to include parents.

- Minister Tara Cheyne MLA.
FINACT requested that multicultural communities need a bigger community facility which should be managed by communities themselves rather than a commercial body. The Minister said that the community consultation has been done and will proceed with proposal of a Community Hall in EPIC and Minister Chris Steel is now responsible for progressing it. FINACT advised that it was an election announcement and no community consultation was undertaken to build in EPIC.



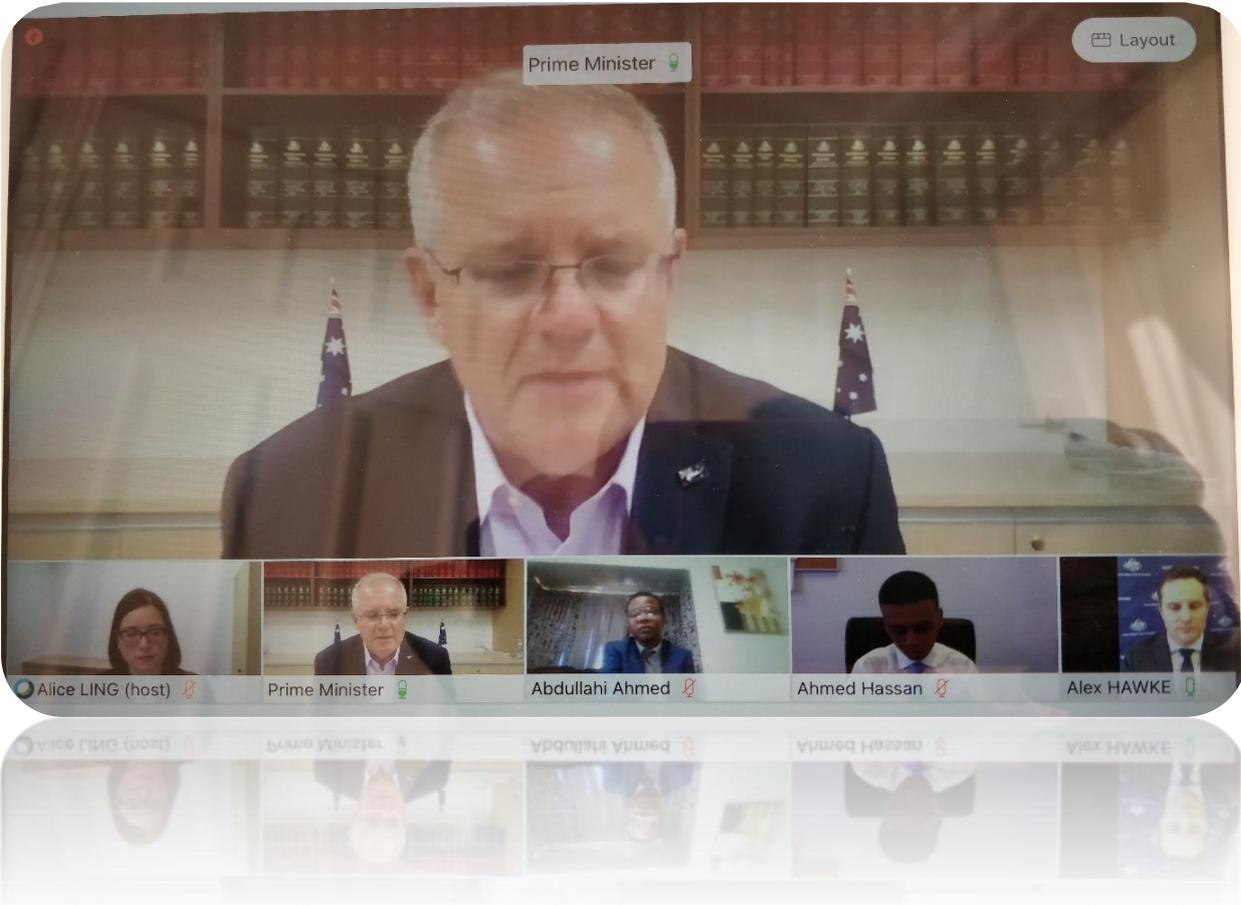
- India's Counsellor to Australia
- ACT government Inclusion and Participation, Community Services Directorate officials
- Community Engagement Officers Department of Home Affairs
- Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Executives.



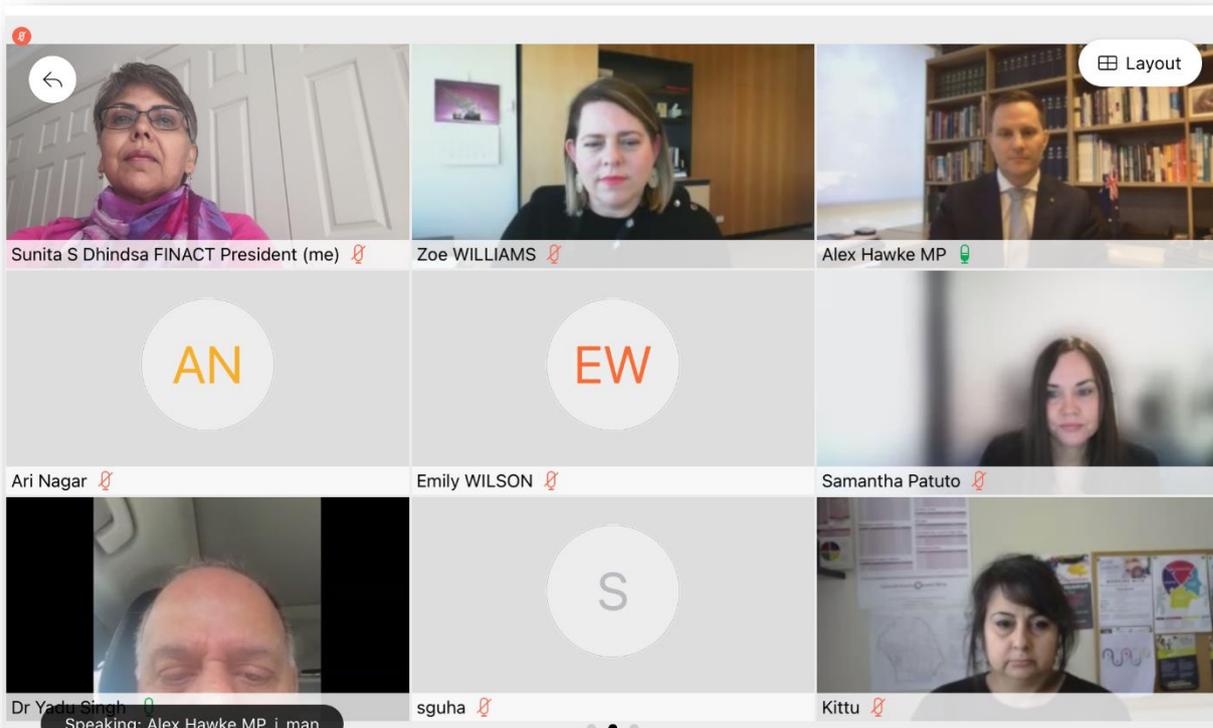
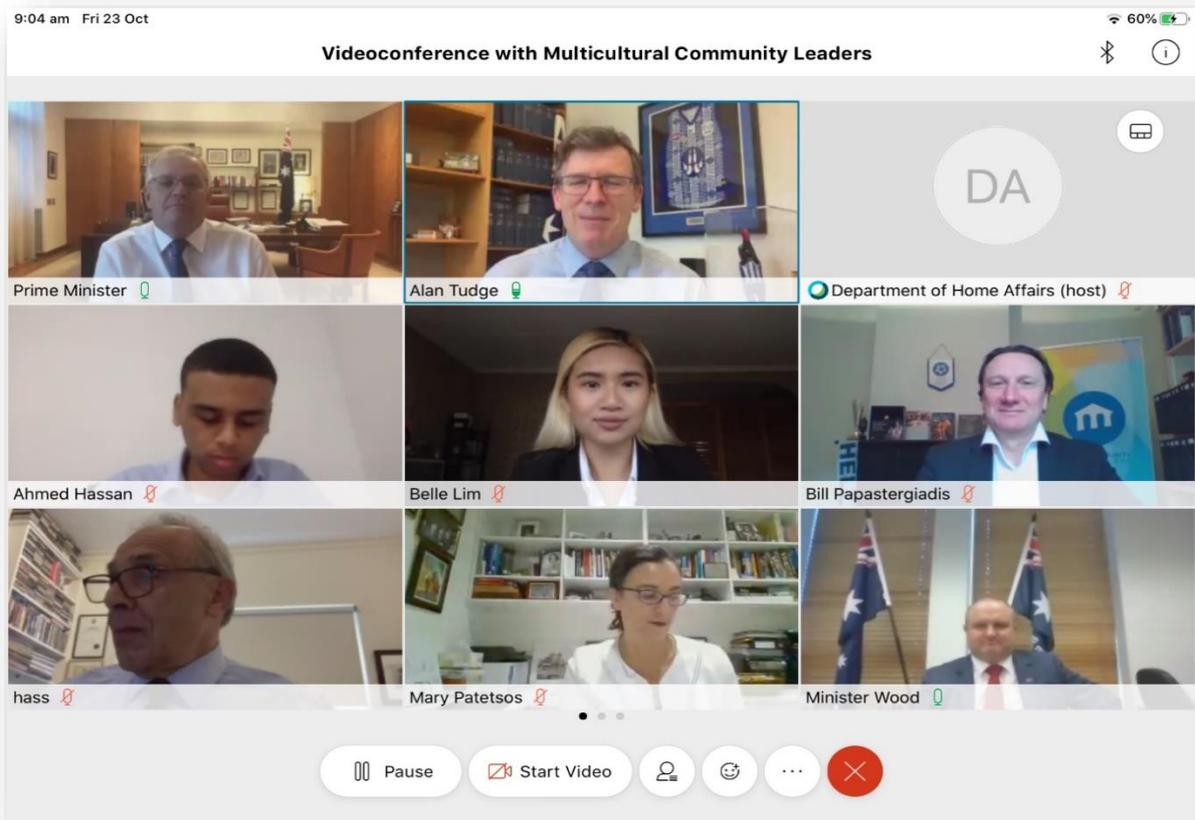


2. Meetings Attended with Stakeholders

- Online meetings were held with the Hon PM Scott Morrison, Hon Minister Marisse Payne, Hon Minister Alex Hawke, Hon A/g Minister Alan Tudge and Hon Assistant Minister Jason Wood on community engagement matters such as visa issues, COVID developments, international travel, international students, etc.



- Social Cohesion virtual meeting with the Department of Home Affairs



- Regular and special meetings of the Council of Indian Federations of Australia (CIFA)
- CIFA meeting with the Hon Minister Alex Hawke.
 - Raised parents visa cost and international students' issues. Also discussed need to broaden definition of family to include parents.



C. Community Work, Social Cohesion, Inclusion

1. COVID Support FINACT and Members

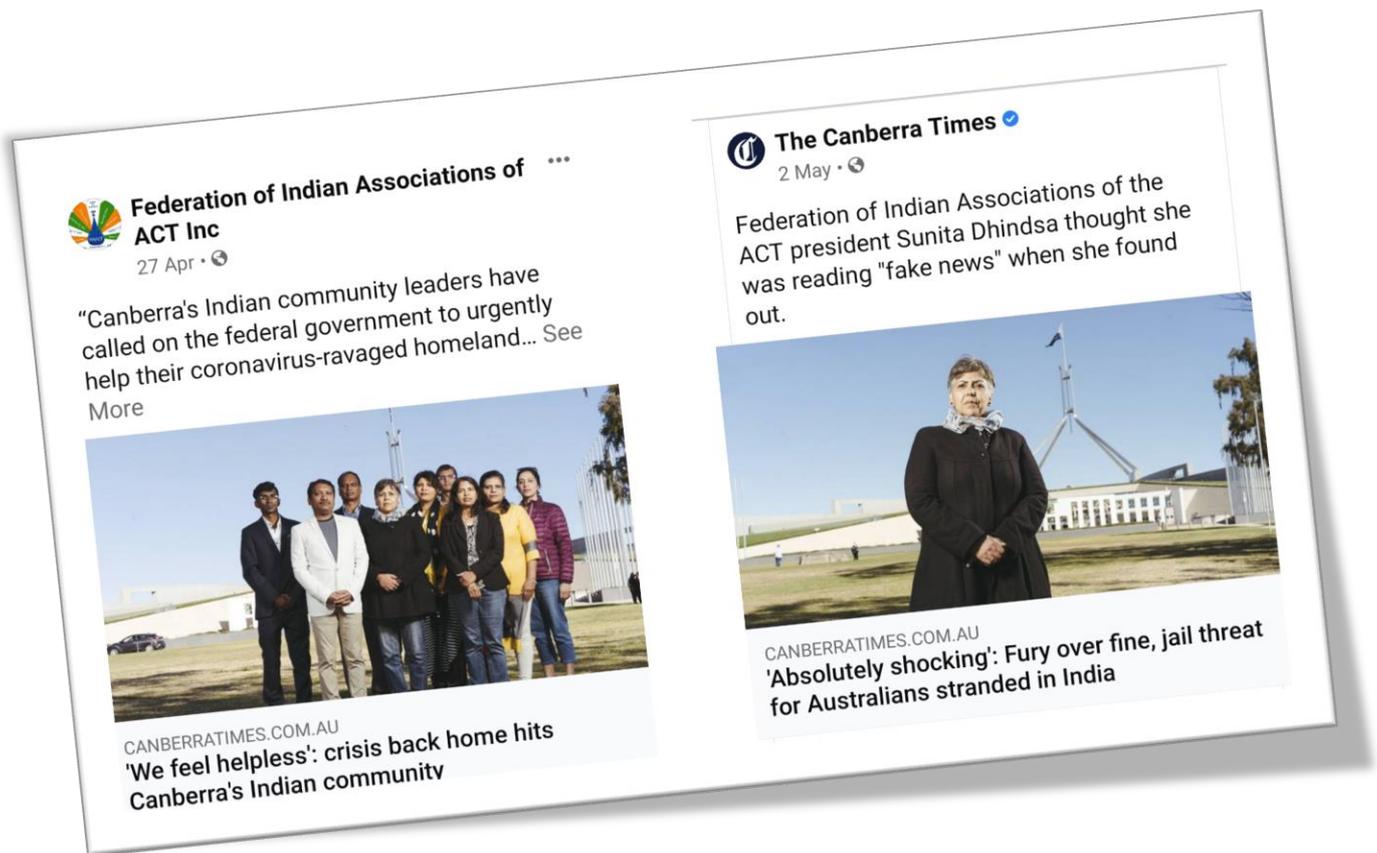
COVID pandemic and related issues maintained their importance such as visa issues, travel exemptions, vaccinations, support. FINACT continued to support students, Indian nationals and Indian Australians by providing guidance and continued to liaise with the HCI and the Department of Home Affairs for specific cases.

At request of the ACT Health, we were able to provide toys to the returning Australians in Hotel Quarantine. Some public events of FINACT and member organisations got cancelled or rescheduled. The resurgence of pandemic in India caused grave concerns, and invoking the *Biosecurity Act* caused immense angst, particularly in the Australians stranded in India.

Australia is the envy of other countries at the way COVID has been contained. Credit goes to the Federal, State/Territory governments and front-line staff of health professionals and other personnel who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe. We understood the necessity of closing borders to gear up the quarantine system to receive flights from India with potential for higher percentage of COVID infection through returned Australians, however, FINACT found that the invoking of the *Bio Security Act* and criminalising Australians returning from India were unacceptable.



FINACT actively lobbied through media channels like Canberra Times, RiotACT, Channel 7, Channel 9, ABC TV, ABC radio, SBS and social media to protest against criminalising the returning Australian citizens from India. FINACT attended meetings organised by the Multicultural Outreach Section of Minister for Immigration Hon Alex Hawke’s office attended by the Hon PM Scott Morrison, Hon Minister Alex Hawke and Hon Minister Jason Woods and later a roundtable meeting of community leaders attended by the Hon Minister Marisse Payne and Hon Minister Alex Hawke.



← Federation of Indian Associations...

29 Apr • ❤️

The Canberra's multicultural community shares their concerns regarding the COVID outbreak in India.

<https://the-riotact.com/canberras-multicultural-community-rallies-to-return-8000-australians-stranded-in-india/457092>



THE-RIOTACT.COM

Canberra's multicultural community rallies to return 8000 Australians stranded in India | Th.

FINACT contacted stranded Australians and helped them share their stories with media and with the Senate Committee hearing on COVID chaired by Senator Katy Gallagher.

Considering the mutating nature of COVID-19 strains and potential for these strains to create new waves of infections with greater harm to people, we have been lobbying Government to:

- ✓ bring stranded Australians across the globe back home as soon as it is safe to do so
- ✓ improve efficacy of quarantine facilities to prevent leakage and breaches
- ✓ expand quarantine facilities so that stranded Australians are brought back home at a faster rate
- ✓ Consider travel exemptions on compassionate grounds.

2. FINACT Harmony Day Celebration

The FINACT Harmony Day celebration was the first outdoor activity organised by FINACT on 11 April 2021 at Glebe Park. The warm, inclusive and cohesive celebration of harmony, multiculturalism and opportunity for networking and catching-up mixed with hot finger food and Indian chai was perfect for a windy and cold afternoon. A well-choreographed performance representing diversity concluded the celebrations. It was graced by many ACT elected representatives, dignitaries, diplomatic staff, distinguished guests, community leaders and members of several communities.





3. Farewelling the High Commissioner of India to Australia HE Mr Gitesh Sarma

The High Commission of India Canberra organised a farewell reception for HE Mr Gitesh Sarma and Mrs Ratnamala Sarma on 24 March 2021 at the Chancery. Their wisdom and humbleness have left an indelible mark on all of us. FINACT President Dr Sunita S Dhindsa was honoured to be one of the speakers at the farewell reception.



4. Welcome Dinner to the High Commissioner of India HE Mr Manpreet Vohra

On behalf of the Indian diaspora and the 30 member organisations, FINACT organised a welcome dinner for the new High Commissioner of India to Australia HE Mr Manpreet Vohra and Mrs Naseem Vohra on 23 May 2021 at the Namaste India restaurant. The dinner was well attended by the community leaders of the Indian diaspora including the 30 member organisations. We look forward to constructive and supportive engagements for the community with the High Commission of India under the guidance of HE Mr Vohra.



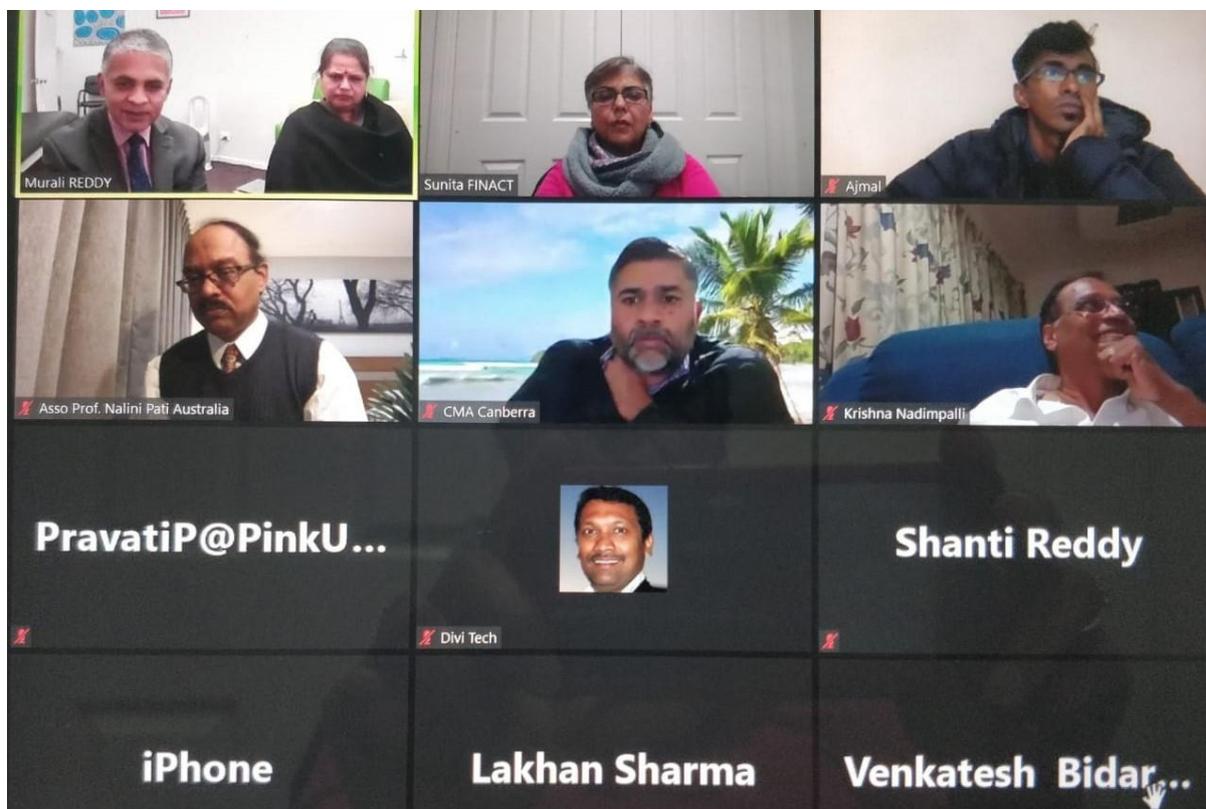
5. Felicitation and Farewell Dinner

Congratulations to Mr Lakshman Rao Alluri on receiving an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2020 Queen's Birthday honours. It is a matter of pride for the Indian diaspora and for all who are engaged in community work. FINACT organised a dinner on 24 September 2020 to felicitate Mr Alluri and farewell Mr Ajay Srivastava (Counsellor, HCI) and Mr Prit Pal Singh (Second Secretary, HCI).



6. FINACT Webinars

Considering the COVID pandemic restrictions and the issues arising, FINACT organised its first webinar 'COVID Times: Vaccinations, Psychological Impacts and Self Care'. The health experts were Dr Nalini Pati Haematologist, Dr Murali Reddy Psychiatrist and Mrs Raji Samprathi Naturopath and Mental Health Educator. We will endeavour to run regular webinars to raise awareness and provide information on current topics that are relevant to communities.



7. Communication with Press council of Australia (PCA) and Sydney Morning Herald

FINACT wrote to the PCA about an article written by Mr Brian Toohey (Journalist, Sydney Morning Herald), which portrayed India negatively with some baseless observation, no evidence and compared with China. FINACT expressed disagreement and requested a public apology.

8. Other Community Engagements

FINACT participated in many community activities outside that of the FINACT member associations to promote inclusion, cohesion, cooperation and collaboration.:

- Diwali Celebrations by the Hindu Council of Australia
- CMCF Peace Bell ceremony at the Nara Gardens
- Hellenic Multicultural Festival
- High Commission of India Events
- Harmony Week Citizenship Ceremony at the Albert Hall
- Canberra Multicultural Community Forum AGM



9. Participation in Workshops/Consultations/Webinars

FINACT participated in various fora:

- ACT government workshop to seek Community COVID feedback. We conveyed the need to be better prepared for next wave. We requested for pamphlets in various languages and also if a speaker can attend to answer questions regarding vaccinations and other issues.
- Meet and Greet with the ACT Minister Tara Cheyne MLA. Minister informed that the ACT Multicultural Festival will continue in 2022 and a committee will be formed to advise on its new format.
- ACT Government's Inclusion and Participation Workshop on what should be included in the *Multicultural Recognition Act*.
- CMCF and MCCI forum on what is needed for multicultural communities in the ACT to age well
- Health Care Consumers Association on palliative care for multicultural community perspective on end-of-life issues.

10. CrimeStopper's Flyers

CrimeStopper flyers in Hindi and Punjabi languages needed some tweaking. FINACT through its member organisations BJSM, Rajasthan Sabha and CPSCA provided the necessary corrections.

11. Database of health professionals of Indian origin

A database of health professionals who can speak multiple Indian languages was considered for development to help people with language issues. A similar database is already in existence and can be accessed at the following link: <https://singh.com.au/category/indian-doctors/>.

D. FINACT Member Activities

1. Welcoming the Pink Umbrella Inc as FINACT member

The organisation Pink Umbrella Inc joined FINACT as its 30th member organisation. It is a registered public charity established in 2014. It works for the immigrant communities for their physical and social health, awareness of mental health stigma, social issues like domestic abuse prevention, and empowerment of youth and women.

2. Members' activities and FINACT Participation

Members organised several events in accordance with the COVID restrictions.

- Onam and Christmas organised by the Canberra Malayalee Association
- Guru Ka Bagh tree plantation by the Canberra Punjabi Sports and Cultural Association
- Kite Festival by the Gujarat Samaj of ACT Inc
- International Women's Day organised by Initiatives for Women in Need
- Ugadi celebrations by the Telugu Association of Canberra
- New Year celebrations by the Navya Andhra Telugu Association
- New Year celebration by the Australian Tamil Cultural Society of ACT
- Cricket Awards Ceremony by the Canberra Telugu League
- Community cricket tournaments by the Indian Australian Multicultural Sports Association
- Health Webinar by OriOz Inc
- Moncrief Temple Bhoomi Poojan ceremony by the Canberra Hindu Mandir
- CMA Cultural evening by the Canberra Malayalee Association
- International Day of Yoga by Integrated Cultures
- Far Away from Home webinar by the Pink Umbrella Inc.

E. General Council Meetings (GCM)

1. First GCM October 2020

The first GCM for 2020-21 was held on 31 October 2020. It was a virtual meeting. Mr Praneeth Gala facilitated the presentation with Ms Lisa Murphy from Crime Stoppers. Ms Murphy updated the Council on the role of crime stoppers in the community, how to contact Crime Stoppers when an incident happens, and answered questions from members. Crime Stoppers is an NGO, not a police organisation. FINACT also formed a partnership with the Region Media (that produces online magazine RiotACT) through Mr Michael McGoogan (Co CEO) to create greater awareness between the ACT and the Australian Indians in the ACT region through partnering in events and sharing information.

2. Second GCM February 2021

The second GCM was held on 21 February 2021 at the Belconnen Labour Club Belconnen. It was the first in-person meeting after one year of virtual meetings. Mr Anup Periera, Senior Project and Engagement Officer of Mental Health Australia provided an overview of the mental health issues faced in the multicultural communities. Mr Pereira raised concern about low reporting of mental health issues in Indian communities in Australia which appeared to be due to stigma associated with mental health issues and poor awareness and requested all the leaders to communicate with the community members. Mr Pereira emphasised that if the government receives enough reporting from a particular community, they will focus on providing more resources and facilities.



3. Third GCM May 2021

The third GCM was held on 20 May 2021. It was hosted by the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon Senator Zed Seselja, at the Parliament House. In his address to the Council, Senator expressed his sympathy for the COVID situation in India, talked about support being provided by Australia, partnership between the two countries and work in the Pacific countries. Senator also expressed his pleasure of working with FINACT and appreciated FINACT's efforts for communicating to the Government travel and visa issues of people of Indian origin. It was brought to Senator's attention that the information flow between the government and the communities could be improved to facilitate better understanding of government's decisions.

The India's Counsellor in Australia Mr Narendra Rana provided a brief overview of the vaccine, COVID testing facilities, number of tests, medicines and other infrastructural developments happening in India. He also mentioned about various government services facilitated to mitigate the COVID crisis in India. Dr B Sriram (First Secretary HCI) also provided the COVID-19 support activities in India and

informed that Red Cross is officially designated as the support and coordinating point for foreign donations.

Mr Rana explained about the recent changes to the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) scheme and supplied a detailed summary to the Council. In response to the question whether the Indian origin foreign nationals are considered to be non-resident Indians (NRI) or foreign nationals under the new rule, Counsellor advised that there is no change and the Indian government still considers them as NRI.



F. Grants

FINACT received a grant of AUD 4000 as part of the 2020/21 Participation (Multicultural) Grants Program (2021PMG056). Extension was received for expending grant received in 2019-20 to December 2021.

G. Other

1. Events Postponed due to COVID restrictions

Many events were impacted by the COVID restrictions. Member organisations and FINACT had to modify, reschedule, postpone or cancel planned events. The FINACT AusIndia Fair 2020 that builds on inclusiveness, harmony and social cohesiveness was postponed from 27 March 2020 due to COVID restrictions.

The Chief Minister's Diwali celebrations were also cancelled.

FINACT and member organisations participate actively in the ACT Multicultural Festival. It was cancelled and will be held in 2022.

2. FINACT Website Update

FINACT website was updated to add forms, remove outdated content, added a search tab, uploaded newsletters on regular basis, and updated information about current activities. It contains, all Annual Reports, Newsletters, Constitution, Submissions, Forms, information on all Executive Committees, and information on many FINACT activities.

3. ACT Legislative Assembly Elections

The elections for the ACT Legislative Assembly were held on 17 October 2020. FINACT congratulated the winners and sought meeting of FINACT Executive Committee with them.

For the first time in the ACT election history, six candidates of Indian origin tested their destiny in the ACT Legislative Elections. FINACT organised a 'Meet and Greet' opportunity with the candidates on 24 September 2020:

- Mr Vijay Dubey, Belco Party Candidate from Ginninderra
- Mr Rattesh Gumber, Liberal Candidate from Kurrajong
- Mr Deepak-Raj Gupta, Labour Candidate from Yerrabi
- Dr Krishna Nadimpalli, Liberal Candidate from Yerrabi
- Mr Amardeep Singh, Liberal Candidate from Murrumbidgee
- Mr Jacob Vadakkedathu, Liberal Candidate from Yerrabi.



4. 2020 ACT Multicultural Awards

The 2020 ACT Multicultural Awards were announced on 13 July 2021. The organisation Intitatives for Women in Need (IWIn), chaired by Dr Madhumita Iyengar, received the ACT Community Organisation (Multicultural Champion) Award. IWIn is a FINACT member. Mr Amardeep Singh received commendation for the ACT Multicultural Individual Champion Award. Mr Singh is a past President of FINACT and his community radio 'Mehak Punjab Di' is a FINACT member. The ACT Outstanding Excellence Award for Diversity and Inclusion was given to Mr Sandipan Mitra and commendation to Mrs Nishi Puri. FINACT feels proud that members of the Indian diaspora have been recognised for their community work.

FINACT congratulates all recipients of the 2020 ACT Multicultural Awards.

5. The New Public Crematorium

The ACT Government has built a new public crematorium at the Gungahlin Cemetery and the Southern Memorial Park to ensure that our population can feel confident that they won't have to travel interstate to farewell a loved one," Minister Steel said. It will be the first public crematorium for the ACT that will meet the needs of diverse communities. Mr Kanti Jinna from the Indian Senior Citizens Association, a FINACT member, was actively involved in the project. FINACT had been lobbying for such a facility for some time along with a large sized community hall to cater to the multicultural needs of the ACT communities.



Member Associations – At a glance

1. ACT Telangana Association (ACTTA)

ACTTA is a not-for-profit association of likeminded Australians of Indian origin from the Telangana State, South India. Objectives of the ACTTA are



- To provide a platform for Telangana people to promote the rich cultural diversity and traditions of Telangana.
- Celebrate Telangana festivals with fellow citizens.
- To strengthen collaboration between the two countries.
- ACTTA also aims to strengthen community harmony by engaging with the broader ACT community.

Some of the key events conducted are Telangana Formation Day celebrations, Bathukamma festival, Educational Scholarships in Telangana State, Clean-up Australia, Tree plantations with High Commission of India and ACT Government, participated in Multicultural Festival, Vanabojanalu and Bush fire fund rising, Stall in Diwali festival in Parliament and Donated Groceries for 150 families in Telangana during COVID-19.

Contact Details

- Contact Persons – Ramesh Kyla
- Email : members@actta.org.au
- Website: <http://www.actta.org.au/>

2. Australian Anglo-Indian Association of Canberra

The Association is working to cater to the needs of the Anglo-Indian Community in Canberra.

Contact Details

- Contact Person - Joe Bailey
- Email: joe.bailey@bigpond.com

3. Australian Tamil Cultural Society (ATCS)

ATCS provides cultural and social functions and helps Tamils and people from India to settle in Australia. Organises debates and educates people in relation to Tamil literature. Classes teaching Tamil for children. Participate in the Multicultural programme at the ACT. Bring together the Tamil Community. Teach Cultural activities such as Dancing, Singing etc to our community people. Running the Chennai Tamil School to teach Tamil Language to our community. Organize tours



etc. Organise cultural programmes. Bring together our community people and mix with the Australian Society.

Contact Details

- Contact Person - Ravi Krishnamurthy
- Email: atcs.act@gmail.com
- Website: <http://www.atcs.org.au/>

4. Bengali Cultural Association of Canberra

Bengali Cultural Association (Canberra) Inc., a not-for-profit organisation serving the Bengali (and Indian) community in and around Canberra, Australia. The Association promotes Bengali culture and community activities, durga puja and food festivals.

Contact Details

- Contact Person – Soma Chakrabarty
- Email: secretarycanberra.bca@gmail.com

5. Bihar Jharkhand Sabha of Australia and New Zealand (BJSM)

With 'Connecting people abroad' as our objective and acknowledging 'संघे शक्ति कलियुगे' (unity is strength in this age), we organise family get together, celebrate festivals, assist new migrants, share information and cooperate with other community groups across Australia and New Zealand.

The association has been organising 3 Milans (get together) in Canberra uninterrupted for since 2006 - Holi Milan, Sharad Milan, and Diwali Milan on the last Sunday of March, July and October respectively.



Contact Details

- Contact Person - Sanjay Pandey
- Website: <https://www.bjsm.org/>
- FaceBook - @BiharJharkhand
- Twitter - @BJSMAusNZ

6. Canberra Hindu Mandir Incorporated (CHM)

The aim of CHM is to provide a platform based on Agama Sastra (traditional temple architecture) in meeting the religious and spiritual needs of those who seek God realisation through His various manifestations, in accordance with traditional Hinduism following the doctrine of Sanatana Dharma.



Some of the key Activities of CHM –

- monthly meets, important festival celebrations including Ram Navami, Guru Poornima Dussehra and Diwali.
- Fundraising events donations to communities at work blood donations Cedric classes and music other activities incidental to the functioning of the temple.
- Activities include fund raising at multicultural festival celebrations of Guru poornima, world curry festival, procured statues from India for the temple in June 2016 and celebrated the anniversary of the statues' reception day.

Contact Details

- Contact Person - Krishna Nadimipalli
- Website – www.hindumandir.org.au
- Facebook - @canberrahindumandir

7. Canberra Jain Mandal (CJM)

CJM is the representative association of the Jain community in Canberra. The aim of the organisation is to promote the principles of Jainism and keep the community members associated with these principles. We aim to achieve it by organising recognised Jain religious events, such as Mahaveer Jayanti, Diwali etc. and social gatherings to discuss the principles of Jainism and its relevance in the present world.



Contact Details

- President - Praveen Jain
- Email: president.cjm@gmail.com, secretary.cjm@gmail.com

8. Canberra Malayalee Association (CMA)

The Canberra Malayalees Association celebrates festivals and organises cultural programs relating to Keralite/Malayalee culture. CMA organises four get-togethers during the year: for Onam, Christmas, Cultural Nite and Malayalee barbecue. Sports activities include cricket (Canberra Malayalee Cricket Club), soccer, basketball, and badminton.



Contact Details

- President : Roshan Menon
- Email: president@canberramalayalee.org
- Facebook: @CBRMalayalees
- Website: <http://canberramalayalee.org/>

9. Canberra Punjabi Sports and Cultural Association (CPSCA)

The Canberra Punjabi Sports and Cultural Association promotes Punjabi culture through literature, music, dance, food, traditional knowledge and sports; provides guidance and support to community; and advocates for community issues. CPSCA participates in the ACT multicultural activities and



Contact Details

- President : Harjinder Dhindsa
- Email: cpsca2014@gmail.com
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cpsca2014/>

10. Canberra Sikh Association

The Canberra Sikh Association (CSA) is an incorporated association and a not-for-profit charitable organisation that achieves its aims and objectives through the active involvement of its members. We are witnessing many of these changes and it could not be better time to be part of CSA and help drive the change for better. There are significant areas of potential development for the Sikh Community in the ACT region and this cannot be done without the support.



Contact Details

- Contact Person - Jagjit Singh Ramgharia
- Email: canberrasikhassociation@gmail.com
- Website: <https://www.canberrasikhassociation.com/>

11. Canberra Telugu League

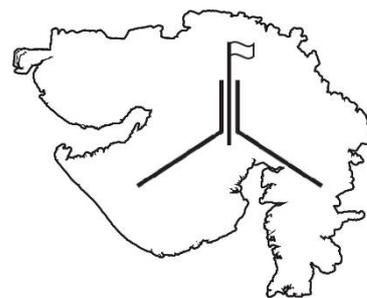
CTL has been formed in the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup Format where each of the 7 Telugu Teams play against each other with a total of 24 matches inclusive of the Family Friendly Grand Finals.

Contact Details

- Contact Person - Sridhar Guda
- Facebook: @ Canberra Telugu League

12. Gujarati Samaj of ACT

Gujarati Samaj of Canberra organizes many Gujarati cultural events and programs in Canberra. It has organised various events such as Navaratri Celebrations, Gujarati Movie Screenings, Kite Flying festivals, etc. GSA also provides ongoing support to new migrants for settlement in Canberra.



Contact Details

- Contact Person - Jay Patel
- Email: volunteers@gujaratisamajcanberra.com
- Facebook: @Gujarati Samaj of Canberra

13. India Australia Multicultural Sports Association

Contact Details

- Contact Person - Sanjay Sharma
- Email: sanjay231sharma@yahoo.com

14. Indian Australian Association of Health and Well-being

Contact Details

- Contact Person - ChittiBabu Divi
- Email: Divi.Haritha@gmail.com

15. Indian Senior Citizens Association

Recognising the cultural differences and demands, Indian Senior Citizens Association was formed in Canberra (ACT) caters to the social, welfare and cultural needs of aged persons of Indian cultural background. The Association has the following objectives

- To facilitate the provision of welfare and social services for aged persons
- To act as spokesperson on behalf of aged persons
- To organise cultural and recreational activities for our seniors.



Contact Details

- President – Vijay Puri
- Email: vijaypuri63@hotmail.com
- Website: <http://indianseniors.org/>

16. Indian Students' Association - ANU (InSA)

Indian Students' Association (InSA) at Australian National University (ANU) is a nodal association for the Indian Students pursuing their studies at ANU. With about 300 members registered with the Association, it is affiliated to the clubs and societies of the ANU Students



Association (ANUSA) and the ANU Postgraduate and Research Students Association (PARSA). The association's key objective is to ensure the common welfare of its members and the student community in general at the ANU. InSA acts as a platform for its members to network with each other as well as other students in the ANU through various social and community building events.

Contact Details

- President – Sarwin D'Souza
- Email – weareinsa@gmail.com
- Facebook - @ Indian Students' Association-ANU

17. Initiatives for Women in Needs

Initiatives for Women In Need (IWIn) is an Indo-Australian volunteer led organisation based in the Australian Capital Territory, to support and advocate for women and children, particularly coming from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and families experiencing domestic violence and discrimination at home and at work. Established in 2013 by Dr. Madhumita IYENGAR, IWIn also supports activities to elevate wellbeing of under-privileged women and children in India through partnership with NGOs operating at a grassroots level, such as EK PRAYAAS in Kolkata and Pazhassi Raja Tribal School in Wayanad, Kerala.

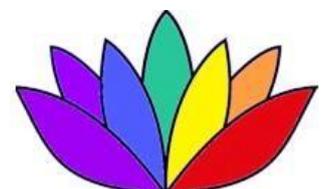


Contact Details

- Contact Person - Dr. Madhumita IYENGAR
- Email: iwinact@gmail.com
- Website: <https://www.iwinact.org/>
- Facebook: @ Initiatives For Women In Need – IwiN

18. Integrated Cultures ACT

Integrated Cultures ACT Inc. aims to bring different cultures into an interaction that allows them to adjust their personal norms to accommodate others' norms and in the process deal effectively with the tensions of cross-cultural interaction and develop a harmony that allows for better understanding, inter-mixing of races and cultures. It allows for expressions of that harmony to occur through the medium of the arts, social engagements, exchange of ideas on



issues of common concern and, through a variety of interactions between and amongst the different people that compose Australia.

Contact Details

- President – Jayanti Gupta
- Email - iwomensnetwork@gmail.com
- Website: <http://www.integratedcultures.org/>

19. Karnataka Association of Canberra

Karnataka Association of Canberra, also referred to as KAC is a non-profit organization primarily aimed at networking for Kannadigas in Australian Capital Territory. It is incorporated in Canberra, Australia. KAC was founded in 2004, after Kannada speaking community leaders of the time envisioned a bright future for the Kannadigas of Canberra. On November 2010 KAC is a registered association, where office-bearers were elected. The organization hosts numerous festival events, ceremonies, and excursion throughout the year. KAC has history of celebrating these events with pomp and glamour and dedicated to members of KAC.



Contact Details

- President – Venkatesh Bidarkal
- Email - venka@tpg.com.au
- Website: <https://www.kannadaincanberra.com/>

20. Madhya Pradesh Association of Australia

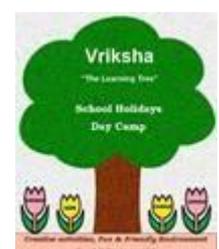
It is a newly formed association in 2020, formed to promote Madhya Pradesh amongst the people hailing from Madhya Pradesh in ACT as well as the work with the Indian Community at large.

Contact Details

- President – Vijay Dubey
- Email – vicdubey@gmail.com

21. Mandir School of Music

The school operates in the Canberra to enable the members of the Indian community to pursue their passion for carnatic music. The school offers shastriya sangetham classes to students of all age groups as well as shloka classes to children. The school provides an opportunity to the local Indian community to continue to connect and keep alive our rich Indian culture. The students have access to a structured classical



music curriculum and children sit through exams starting with basic to advanced levels. Mandir School of Music conducts annual stage concerts and actively participates at the local events e.g. multicultural festival, Diwali mela. Vriksha is a group of professionals with branches of education, culture, music and mathematical learning for your kids.

Contact Details

- Contact Person – Ragini Santhanam
- Email - raginis@iinet.net.au
- Website: <http://vriksha.org/>

22. Mehak Punjab Di Radio

Mehak Punjab Di Radio aims to engage with the community from the Indian subcontinent through the Punjabi language, catering to all tastes and interests, while promoting Punjabi language, literature, and culture, from both sides of the border. The program provides local and subcontinental news, sports news and weather updates, including information on current activities in the ACT and the region. Also featuring Punjabi music, both old and contemporary. Mehak Punjab Di Radio broadcasts every Saturday from 8am to 9am.



Contact Details

- Contact Person– Amardeep Singh
- Email - mehakpunjabdiradio@gmail.com
- Website: <https://www.cmsradio.org.au/programs/punjabi-program/>
- Facebook: @ Mehak Punjab Di Radio

23. Navya Andhra Telugu Association (NATA)

Representing Andhra Pradesh in Australia NATA is formed in 2014 after Andhra Pradesh evolved as new state with an old name. Our motivation is to support everyone associated with Andhra Pradesh in every possible way. We put our best efforts to integrate culture from our homeland with Australian culture. We strive to help community and other local communities to understand different lifestyles associated and develop harmony within. NATA on its part contribute to help local communities in various aspects. NATA conducted Yoga Seminars which helps to promote healthy lifestyle. NATA conducts IT Seminar every year where successful Subject Matter Experts from various domains run a workshop with information of emerging technologies & associated career opportunities NATA takes every opportunity to organize cultural & spiritual events.



Contact Details

- President– Prasad Tipirneni
- Email - president@nata.org.au
- Website: <http://content.nata.org.au/>
- Facebook: @ Navya Andhra Telugu Association-Canberra (NATA)

24. Oriya Association (OriOz)

OriOz is a collective of residents of Australia who originate from or have connections to the state of Odisha in India. The vision is to sustain an Odia Community in Australia that is engaged, vibrant and inclusive.



We work to build an active, engaged, and inclusive Odia community in Australia. We maintain a community platform so that members can support each other for social and emotional wellbeing. We provide a community infrastructure and facilitate existing and newly arrived Odias to be active members of the local community and the Odia community of Australia.

Contact Details

- Contact: DR Ram Prasad Mohanti
- Email: oriozcommunity@gmail.com
- Website: <https://www.orioz.org.au/>
- Facebook: @ORIOZCommunity

25. Pink Umbrella Inc

The Pink Umbrella Inc is a registered public charity established in 2014. It works for the immigrant communities for their physical and social health, awareness of mental health stigma, social issues like domestic abuse prevention, and empowerment of youth and women.



Contact Details

- Contact Person - Dr Pravati Panigrahi
- Email: pinkumbrella01@gmail.com
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pinkumbla/>

26. Rajasthan Sabha of Australia and New Zealand

Rajasthan Sabha of Australia and New Zealand is a group of individuals who originate from the State of Rajasthan and work together to promote the Rajasthani Culture in Australia and New Zealand.



Contact Details

- Contact Person – Lakhan Sharma
- Email: lsharma.act@gmail.com
- Facebook: @ rajasthansabha

27. Rajdhani Marathi Mandal Canberra (RMMC)

RMMC was formed to cater to the needs of the local Marathi community of Canberra. RMMC aims to:

- Promote Marathi culture e.g. literature, music, dance, drama, and community activities in general.
- Promote mutual understanding and goodwill between the people of Marathi origin, the Indian sub-continent, and other communities in Australia with interest in Marathi culture.
- Provide and promote social and cultural contact among its members and the broader Australian community in general.
- Function as a non-profit and a non-political organization.



Contact Details

- Contact Person – Vikranth Vandale
- Email: rmmc.can@gmail.com
- Facebook: @Rajdhani Marathi Mandal Canberra
- Website: <https://canberramarathi.org/>

28. Sprintz Inc

The association carries out various cultural as well as sports activities in Canberra such as weekly Basketball, Basketball Training for kids, Weekly Volleyball.



Contact Details

- President - Shaji Karattiyattil
- Facebook: @ Sprintz Inc

29. Telugu Association of Canberra

Telugu Association of Canberra is a cultural and non-profit organisation representing the Telugu speaking people. We promote language, culture, music, dance, and drama and our rich heritage among the Telugu and non-Telugu speaking people.



TAC has been working with and for the people to bring everyone together and being there for each other in the hour of need. Telugu Association of Canberra works to reinforce and refine our outreach efforts by bringing people and traditions together.

Contact Details

- President – Manjula Pitta
- Email: teluguassociationcanberra@gmail.com
- Website: <https://tacanberra.org/>
- Facebook: @TACanberra

30. UC Indian Association (UCIA)

This is a non-profit organization aimed at facilitating a space of sharing for the students of University of Canberra away from their homes. The Association is aimed to supporting the Indian students currently studying at University of Canberra through various social and cultural events.



Contact Details

- President – Ashwin Padmanabhan
- Email: uc.indianassociation@gmail.com
- Facebook: @UCIndiAssoc



2020-21 Annual Report

A Year of Accomplishments.

We thank all our sponsors, supporters and partners for their support throughout the year 2020-21 and look forward to their patronage in the coming year.



Federation of Indian Associations of ACT

Coordination :: Cooperation :: Collaboration