



Thorathuru

SLA Newsletter - May 2025

Sri Lanka Association of NSW (SLA) Inc.

Sri Lanka Association acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present, and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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President's Message

At the Sri Lanka Association of NSW's AGM in October 2024, a new committee was appointed, and I am incredibly proud to lead a talented group of individuals who are dedicated to elevating the association and recovering from past challenges. This year, our committee's primary focus is on building our membership base and fostering a strong sense of community.

I am pleased to share that our website and Facebook page are now live, thanks to the tremendous effort of our secretary, Don Iddamalgoda. This marks an exciting milestone for the association's digital presence.

Our first calendar event of the year was the 77th Independence Day Celebrations, which we jointly organized with The Sinhalese Cultural Forum of NSW. The event was a huge success — beautifully organized and full of vibrant colours. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the young Sri Lankan talents from Sinhalese schools and dance groups who performed and made the event truly special.

The celebration was well-attended by members, well-wishers, and special invitees, including the mayors from The Hills Shire, Parramatta, and Hornsby councils. I want to thank my committee and all those who put in hard work to make our first event of the year such a success.

Looking ahead, we are committed to continuing the growth of our association and making a positive impact within our community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Mrs Anoja De Alwis
President
Sri Lanka Association of NSW 2024-2025

Sri Lanka Independence Day Celebrations 2025

The 77th Independence Day of Sri Lanka was celebrated by the Sri Lanka Association of NSW (SLA) and the Sinhalese Cultural Forum (SCF) with the active participation of Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Malay, and Burgher communities on 15th February 2025 at the Roselea Community Centre, Carlingford, NSW.



The Presidents of SLA and SCF hoisting the national flag

Independence Day, which is also referred to as the National Day, is a Sri Lankan national holiday celebrated annually on the 4th of February to commemorate the country's political independence from British rule in 1948. In the last few years,

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SLA and SCF have taken the leadership for commemorating this special day in Sydney, Australia. Among the dignitaries who graced the occasion were Lord Mayor, Martin Zaiter, City of Parramatta, Mayor, Warren Wadell of Hornsby City Council and Mayor, Dr Michelle Byrne of Hills Shire Council. Mr Jabeer Cader, the current President of the Austra-Lanka Muslim Association (ALMA), also graced the occasion along with many SLA and SCF presidents of the past years.



Anoja de Alwis, the President of SLA, delivering her speech

The presidents of the two associations, Mrs Anoja de Alwis and Mr Rukshan Anthony, hoisted the National Flag for Sri Lanka. This was followed by the dignitaries and association presidents lighting the traditional oil lamp amid traditional “Magul Bera Vadanaya.”



The events and the audience marking the celebration

On-stage activities commenced with a choir of young Sri Lankans chanting Jayamangala Gatha (Stanzas of the victorious Auspices). This was followed by a youth choir leading the singing of the National Anthems of Sri Lanka (in Sinhala and Tamil) and Australia.

An important event highlight was the blessings from the invited religious dignitaries from the four major religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, practised in Sri Lanka. They prayed and blessed the nation for a prosperous and united future.

The associations received uplifting Independence Day messages from the leaders of the Democratic Social Republic

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of Sri Lanka, Mr Anura K Dissanayake, Honourable President, Dr Harini Amarasuriya, Honourable Prime Minister and Mr Vijitha Herath, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs. These messages were read out to the audience during the ceremony proceedings. In his message, the Honourable President invited all Sri Lankans to stand strong and united to take part in shaping a modern vision of freedom and contribute to a new era of revival. Honourable Prime Minister in her message, reminded us that the concepts of “thriving nation” and “beautiful life” are parts of not just a vision, but a call for action from all communities regardless of their ethnicity, religion and social status. The message of the Foreign Minister also echoed similar sentiments of working with determination for the freedom, unity and prosperity of the nation.

Addressing the gathering, both Lord Mayors expressed their gratitude to the Sri Lankan Australians for their immense contributions to the social fabric of harmonious and multi-cultural Australia. They emphasised that the Sri Lankan Australians are excelling and contributing to all areas of importance to the contemporary Australian society. Their contributions are prominent in many areas, including education, research, infrastructure development, business, government, culture and community services. The presidents of the SLA and SCF thanked the invitees and their contributions to this important and culturally rich event, which all Sri Lankans have a true ownership.

Sri Lanka’s diverse culture was showcased with several Sinhalese and Tamil music, dance, and singing items, which entertained the guests. The well-rehearsed and beautifully performed items were engaging, entertaining, and showcased the performing arts which unite our nation.

An SLA representative Mr Kitsiri Senadheera, thanked the guests, the audience, the food stall organisers, the entertainment providers and the organising committees and all others for their participation and contributions.

The guests were served morning refreshments with Kiribath and traditional Sri Lankan food. Several food stalls were organised, where the participants could choose from a wide selection of foods for lunch.

HSC High Achievers Awards 2025

The Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales (SLA) held the Annual HSC High Achievers Award Ceremony 5th of April 2025 at the Glenhaven Community Centre, Glenhaven.

The recognition, felicitation and honouring those HSC (High School Certificate) students of Sri Lankan origin by the SLA has been an annual feature and event in the calendar of the Sri Lankan Community of NSW for 23 years.

Each year, the students who have performed to an exceptionally high standard at the HSC examination in that year and received an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 95 and above are recognised. The ATAR rank is used to offer undergraduate places by Universities in NSW. The HSC High Achievers Educational Awards were open to HSC students of Sri Lankan origin based on their performance at the 2024 Examination.

Mr. Kithsiri Senadeera delivered the opening speech with a brief history of the Award. The welcome address was delivered by Mrs. Anoja de Alwis, the President of the SLA.

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She invited the students to join the SLA and to take up the challenge of leading the Association for the benefit of the Sri Lankan community into the future.



SLA President Ms Anoja de Alwis delivering the welcome speech.



Kitsiri Senadheera, the chief coordinator of the event, delivered the opening address, describing the history of the event

During his speech, the Chief Guest, Mr. Nick Berman, former mayor of Hornsby Shire Council, appreciated the recognition

of High Achievers by the SLA in an annual event. The guest speakers gave excellent presentations focusing on the building of a solid foundation for a successful career from a young age. Mrs. Padmi Dissanayake encouraged the students to pursue their paths with resilience, creativity, and independence. Mr. Hanif Brims reminded the students that there is no substitute for hard work, and learning is a continuous process. He stressed the importance of physical health and fitness in the journey of life, something which is being overlooked by young professionals. Ms. Nicole Hartas, Business Development Manager at CIMA, spoke about the new outlook of the corporate world with Artificial Intelligence playing a major role and how to adjust to today's dynamic environment.



The High Achievers with SLA President and the main coordinator of the event

Eleven students were nominated for the Award, representing the multicultural communities and religious groups in the Sri

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Lankan society. The High Achievers were awarded trophies inscribed with their names, a Certificate of Achievement and a gift bag valued at \$150.

In Honouring and Respecting the Parents by the Awardees, the students stood up to present a thank you message to their parents and traditionally offered their gratitude. This incredibly heartfelt and emotional moment was accompanied by a magnificent rendition of the song “You Raise Me Up”. by Miss Kitaara Wijayasekara.

One of the Awardees gave the ‘Thank you’ speech on behalf of the High Achievers. The Vote of Thanks was given by Ms. Swarna Samuel.



Dignitaries after lighting the Oil Lamp



A group of the 2024 HSC High Achievers attending the ceremony



Various presentations informing and inspiring the attendees

Annual Seniors' Day Luncheon

The Annual Seniors Day Luncheon organised by the Sri Lanka Association was held with the active participation of over 120 seniors' family members and well-wishers. This was followed by the High Achievers 2025 awards ceremony at the Glenhaven Community Centre.

A delicious traditional lunch was served to the attendees of the event. The food was donated by one of the current committee members who prefers to remain anonymous. This allowed for SLA to raise much-needed funds for its functions. We are truly grateful to this member.

The music, songs and entertainment, including Baila and other popular Sri Lankan tunes and songs, were coordinated and delivered in great style by Cecil Fonseka.



Lunchtime at the seniors' event



Some committee members and other participants at the HSC Awards and Seniors events

SLA Committee 2025

SLA, NSW Executive Committee for 24-25 is led by Anoja de Alwis, a longstanding member and an executive committee member holding many important offices in the organisation. She is doing a commendable job with a committee of depleted numbers. She is aptly supported by the new secretary, Don Iddamalgoda (Ravi). Don's dedication and efficiency have been instrumental in the success of many events organised by the SLA, NSW, this term. All other members are willing contributors to their utmost capacity to the journey so far.

We appreciate your assistance and support in carrying out the social services we do without hindrance.



SLA Committee 2024-2025

Anoja De Alwis (President)

Jabeer Carder (Vice President)

Kitsiri Senadheera(Vice President))

Don Iddamalgoda (Secretary)

Presenji Jayawickrama (Public Officer)

Tilak Ekanayake (Treasurer)

Lakshman Randeniya (Editor)

Anula Dissanayake

Indrani Wijesekera

Swarna Christine Samuel

Ranjit Gunawardana

Arosh Vithana

Duke Ramachandran

The Blood Donations Drive

The SLA participated in a Lifeblood blood donation drive coordinated by the Hon Secretary Don Iddamalgoda. Several SLA committee members, their friends and relatives have already donated blood.

Lifeblood needs 100,000 new donors every year to meet the ongoing need for blood. That's 100,000 reasons to donate. See thousands of reasons from real donors. You only need one to take the plunge.

Check eligibility to donate and book

<https://www.lifeblood.com.au/>





Proud blood donors supporting the SLA campaign

Vesak Bakthi Gee

SLA executive committee and members participated yet again the Vesak Day Celebrations at the Lankarama temple on 11 May 2025. The event was coordinated by the Hon Treasurer, Thilak Ekanayake. Our group of committee members and their colleagues beautifully recited two famous songs by Victor Rathnayake, Ama Dahara and Devram Vehere.



Singing two famous Vesak/Buddhist songs by Victor Rathnayake

A beautiful blend of cultures

By invitation from Sri Lanka Women's Network and Blacktown City Council, SLA participated in the opening ceremony of Aboriginal arts inspired Sri Lankan Batik show.



President Anoja de Alwis and the members of SLA, NSW/SLAWN (Sri Lankan Australian Women's Network) at the opening ceremony at the Dennis Johnson Library, Parramatta



SLAWN members at the Sri Lankan Batik Sarees exhibition at FOMA (Fabrics of Modern Australia) event in October 2024

A forerunner to this event was held at Ivy Sunroom on George Street, Sydney, on Saturday, October 12 2024, at FOMA (Fabrics of Modern Australia) exhibition. FOMA promotes cross-cultural engagement and diversity in fashion, uniting communities and empowering local talent.

Welcoming of the new Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia

SLA is planning an event to welcome the new Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia, Her Excellency Ms Yasoja Gunasekera. The event details can be found below, and we welcome your attendance to this event and support Her efforts for galvanising and enhancing the long-term cultural and economic relationships between the two countries.

A career diplomat with nearly three decades of experience, Ms Gunasekera began her service in 1996 and has since held several key diplomatic assignments. These include serving as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Indonesia and High Commissioner to Bangladesh, and she played a pivotal role in establishing the country's Consulate General in Guangzhou, China.

High Commissioner-designate Gunasekera holds a Master's degree in Foreign Affairs and Trade from Monash University, Australia and an LLB Degree in Law from the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. She is a past pupil of C.M.S. Ladies' College, Colombo.



SRI LANKA ASSOCIATION OF NSW

are delighted to invite you to a special luncheon,
“Honouring Heritage, Embracing the Future”

to honour and warmly welcome Her Excellency
Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera,
the new Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia.

Join us for an afternoon of celebration, connection, and community spirit
as we come together to mark this exciting new chapter.

Date: Sunday, 15th June 2025
Time: 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Venue: Thornleigh Community Centre, Thornleigh, NSW
Tickets: \$80 per person
(Buffet Lunch includes a bottle of wine on the table)
Note: ★ BYO (Bring Your Own beverages)

Seats are strictly limited and available on a first come, first served basis,
so be sure to secure your spot early!

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to meet
Her Excellency Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera in person,
celebrate her appointment, and strengthen the bonds within our
Sri Lankan and wider Australian community.

To reserve your seat or for further information,
please contact the Secretary
on 0425 763 526 or secretary@slansw.org.au.

Winter Ball 2025

The signature SLA event, Winter Ball, will be held at the Epping Club on Saturday, 9 August 2025. It is promising to be a grand event with The Band Majesty from Melbourne providing the entertainment.

Tickets are selling fast, and we encourage all members and others to contact a committee member to reserve your place at a table with your friends.

Kukulegama Students - Project

SLA is supporting the Lions Club of Wattala in a project to provide essential school supplies to 158 students from Kukulegama village. This initiative will help equip these students with essential educational and personal items for their education.

The project spans across six schools: Kaburawela Maha Vidyalaya (80 students), Maragahdeniya School (40 students), Bellana Mahavidyalaya (10 students), Kapugedara Kanishka Vidyalaya (10 students), Molkawa Mahavidyalaya (10 students) and Mathugama School (8 students). SLA donated a sum of A\$6717 on 9 April 2025, which will be administered by the Lions Club of Wattala, Sri Lanka. This amounted to 1,116.480 Sri Lankan Rupees. Any remaining money will be used to buy track shoes for I H K Madushantha from the C W W Kannagara College, Matugama. He represented Sri Lanka in the cross-country event in Pakistan. SLA wishes Madushantha and all the students the best of luck.



The poster is for the Winter Ball 2025, presented by The Sri Lanka Association of NSW Inc. It features a dark blue background with white snowflake patterns at the bottom and sides. The text is primarily in white and yellow. At the top left is the SLA logo, which includes a lion and the year 1979. The main title 'Winter Ball 2025' is in a large, elegant white script font. Below it, the date 'On Saturday 9th August 2025' is in a smaller white font. The venue '@ Epping Club' is in a bold white font, with the address '45-47 Rawson Street Epping NSW' below it. The event details include 'Welcome drinks 6:30pm', 'Doors open 7:00pm until Midnight', 'Dress code: Formal/Black Tie', 'Three course Dinner & Wine', and '\$150 Per Head'. A photo of the band 'BAND MAJESTY from Melbourne' is shown on the right side.

THE SRI LANKA ASSOCIATION OF NSW Inc
PRESENTS

Winter Ball 2025

On Saturday 9th August 2025
@ Epping Club
45-47 Rawson Street Epping NSW

Welcome drinks
6:30pm

Doors open
7:00pm until Midnight

Dress code:
Formal/Black Tie

*Three course Dinner
& Wine*

**\$150
Per Head**

BAND MAJESTY
from Melbourne.