

## PANEL 2: COORDINATING SEWA ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

### Preety Bains

Hello, Good afternoon one of the concepts that we're going to be exploring today is the concept of sewa. Sewa is also known as selfless service, is one of the three key pillars of Sikhism espoused by our founder guru Nanak theatre. traditionally sewa used to take the form of supporting members of the broader community in delivering basic requirements such as food, community and support, and lodging. In recent times organizations such as Khalsa aid have extended this concept of sewa to be on borders to provide humanitarian support in applying this notion of modern-day sewa is crucial in today's day and age, particularly when we talked about the growth of Sikhs in Australia being 400 percent growth in the last 10 years. It is now our responsibility to organize sewa because the impact that we can make is magnified, given the rate that we're growing and our scale, as a community we need to start considering what does sewa mean in today's modern-day and age What is the best way to provide this sewa?

How do we even identify what this sewa means, and what does our community need and how do we coordinate and deliver sewa in the most meaningful and impactful way. So to help me explore those topics we've got two very distinct speakers, first Dr. Malvinder Bains who's a neuroscientist most well known for her work in promoting brain health and awareness of neurogenetics narrative diseases, sorry I'm not a scientist so would you like to join us on the panel today Dr. Malvinder Bains and our second-panel speaker is Gurmesh Singh an Australian politician and member of the new south wales legislative assembly since 2019 representing Coffs Harbor for the nationals. So, we might start with yourself, permission, I know your family has been in Australia for about 120 years now and was one of the first settlers of Sikhs in Australia have you seen over those generations the concept of sewa development and what does sewa mean to you today.

### Gurmesh Singh

So our family arrived here in the 1890s my great-grandfather was here cutting cane in the north and part of new south Wales and Queensland and we settled in the Wakaga area in the 1950s and during those early probably 20 years or so of settlement in that area the community was obviously very small only a handful of families and you know probably the way that they manifested their sewa was by helping each other out and settling into what could have been quite a hostile environment in the 1950s 60s and early 70s by helping each other out these families often would live in agricultural sheds, would save up enough money to then move into town and you know when you speak to a lot of those old families they will tell stories of well we used to have dinner at each other's houses because no one spoke the language no one spoke English very well and cointegrated into society than someone who'd come straight away, so I guess it manifested itself in helping each other in the early years and then as the families became more and more established that have longer, Nowadays nearly every day of the week and during that Christmas period they run longer you know, 15 hours a day to hundreds of people every day in a community of probably only a few hundred people, so it's changed and it continues to change but one thing I have seen is that the sewa that a lot of people do in in our community is still quite

inward focused. It's focused on our community but I guess we can explore that a little bit later on.

### **Preety Bains**

Yeah that's it that's a great length, into I know that yourself talked about this, you got a lot into the community and how do you kind of shift that difference of traditional sewa of that length of sewa to what you do, speak a little bit about that, that'd be interesting.

### **Dr. Malvindar Bains**

Fantastic question, thank you so much to the YSPN team for actually welcoming me here, I'm actually from Auckland New Zealand so it's nice to be on the other side of the ditch real pleasure to be here. Yeah, the concept of sewa for me and how we can best apply sewa is quite different. I come from the field of stem science technology engineering and medicine and traditionally we're known to you now just get on with our task whether that's dealing with your patients as a medical doctor or in my case dealing with my specimens in the laboratory and you know you focus on what you're doing in your everyday life and you can get fixated on what you're doing and close yourself off to the rest of the world because you're in your professional field, I guess I had the luxury of meeting a lot of families and patients impacted by the diseases that I work on in the laboratory and I think we've heard this resonate throughout the conference so far we need to listen to what these people in the community are telling us about what they need and we need to hear the call for sewa sometimes we don't know what kind of sewa to do because we haven't heard our call yet.

For me, my call came in the form of a family impacted by Huntington's disease and that's one of the diseases I work on in a laboratory and they said to me it's all farewell and good that you're working on these brains of these families that have donated their brains to science but what about the next generation that is going to be impacted by this devastating disorder what are you doing for them and I was taken back, I was shocked to have this kind of question because I'm getting on with my daily life in the laboratory.

This is my life, this is what I do and suddenly I realize I'm blessed, [06:31inaudible] has blessed me with this knowledge base and I can actually share this with the community, I can speak about the disease in the community and raise awareness in that way or I could take things to the next level and so I started having conversations with people impacted by these brain disorders and hearing what they actually need and whether or not I have the skill set to provide that is beyond what this conversation is all about you can always draw in those experts to help you but I quickly realized that these young people want to know more about genetic testing, these young people want to know more about how they can deal with insurance companies when it comes to having a risk of a degenerative disorder in their family and so for me I was like wow, actually I can do some kind of sewa, I can actually help support the next generation of people that are going to be at risk of this disease and that's how I got started on this journey.

### **Preety Bains**

That's great question information I think, would you say that you face similar concerns from the community being a member of parliament whereby people come to you with

concerns uncomfortable to address it from a policy perspective as opposed to what would you say that we could be doing on the ground level before it reaches to a policy level.

### **Gurmesh Singh**

It's a very broad question so I'll try and answer it in that broad way the best way to do it might be a bit of audience and participation so can I get everybody in the room to raise their hands let's do a process of elimination so everyone raise their hands, who here is a member of the SES oh sorry, put your hands down if you're a member of the SES keep your hands up, the state emergency service David cleanups put your hands down if you're a member of the rural fire service or the country fire service okay put your hands down if you are on a committee or a board aside from YSPN that is community focused I'm trying to think of more community-based things, put your hand down if you've a country like Australia we can genuinely serve our community you know I look around this room and I see a hundred well-educated people who could devote their time for instance to their kids sport and actually make a real difference to the lives of two or three hundred children being a part of that group so there are many different ways that we can do that as a community rather than just looking for government to do that because governments don't run a lot of these community and sporting groups.

Then we look at things that have happened in the last six months, being the natural disasters that we've had with the fires that have touched both new South Wales and Victoria and very early on we saw Khalsa be active in places like Kofsava and we saw some very well-publicized seat groups here in Victoria going out into those communities and helping where they can, so you know I think we could do a lot more of that and not just as Sikh groups but just as Sikhs as general we don't have to do them under the umbrella of a Sikh group, it's great if we can but there are also groups like rotary and lions who you know as a community we're very underrepresented in those groups in terms of population we do tend to stick to our groups when we do that work so I'm not sure if that answers the question but that's my thoughts on where we could go from here.

### **Preety Bains**

That's a great answer. Do you think that we're doing, and this could be for both of you do you think that we're doing a lot of the concepts that we talk about is this idea of having an individualistic mindset as opposed to a collective mindset and I don't know if it's that we don't want to do things right, it might just be that we don't know how to bond together as a community to create a coordinated approach to sewa and I'd be interested to hear what you guys think about what's the best way to create that framework for that community to start doing this work.

### **Dr. Malvinder Bains**

Look I think that there's a lot of power in being part of a collective and I don't want to take the cliché that many hands make light work but it's true. I think if there is something like a natural disaster or something, too hard for us to take time out of our very busy professional schedules to do sewa we won't do it right, we won't do it because if it is in the too-hard basket many people have families, many people have other commitments but it's about chipping away at a cause it's about doing part of something bigger there's always going to be someone leading something right; but at the end of the day, that

leader is not successful unless they have a big collective behind them working with them. You don't have to be that leader but being part of that kind of collective gives you a lot of power and then that gives you a sense of satisfaction of that woman fuzzy feeling that you get from doing something meaningful.

For someone like me, something as small as just taking 10 minutes out to listen to a family member impacted by disease and hearing what they need was my start of the sewa journey it wasn't setting up a not-for-profit charitable organization five years later which is the end product of all of their dialogue and I think we need to get out of our head that we need to do something drastic to be considered doing sewa. We take a photo of it and we put it on Facebook and we self-promote no it's more about being part of something greater than ourselves and I guarantee all of you at some point you would have heard the call whether that's helping an old lady across the road or you know giving some food to that harmless person whatever kind of stuff that you've done in your life but I think if you think of it as a small task something that's innate and within us as opposed to something that we must do then we will all be doing it.

### **Gurmesh Singh**

I agree with that 100 percent. The concept for sewa you know it's a few hundred years old now and you think of the society a few hundred years ago in India versus a society that we live in now you know back then the problems were economic and problems of poverty but they're not issues really that we have in Australia and to continue on that point you could do sewa by mentoring a young person at work or even out of work, and that's something that you could be doing every day that makes a real difference to someone's life who then might go on to be a CEO of a major company. You know helping, tutoring people at school it's the little things that can add up to quite big effects later on down the track but yeah, they need to be small and meaningful they don't need to be the big event with 500 people and media and all this kind of stuff even small things can have quite a big effect.

### **Preety Bains**

Thank you I think that was a great point that you raised and it was about chipping away and coming to that end goal. How do we motivate our community to come on that journey with us and stress that because we've got 100 people here that you know they've already got the mindset they want to start doing this work they're spending their Saturday here, how do we spread that message because there are 125,000 seats in Australia today and we're the fastest-growing minority group in Australia but we're also if you go out on the street and you go hang on the seat and you've got new standard out in Australia and going oh, are they the guys who wear the turban and is it enough that we're seeing like three seats on the media and we're going well look how great Sikh's are like oh, we're on the media is that enough or how do we stress that point to the whole community.

### **Dr. Malvinder Bains**

She's coming in hard and fast with these difficulties questions I'm sweating [15:34 inaudible] I think that we are in a privileged position to be most of us I'm assuming in here is a professional of some kind that has some sort of job or some sort of qualification and we have the luxury of being able to step into a career and make a big change in the world, but how do this spread and I think the proof is in the pudding; if we see more of our people

out there doing this now I don't mean by taking that selfie when you're feeding a homeless person or whatever but if somebody else notices you doing this right then we're all going to move forward together and push other people along with us. I have no idea how I was discovered by YSPN, I still don't know how I ended up here and I do think it's probably come from somebody noticing me doing something a little bit outside of the square, on behalf of a whole lot of other people that's been noticed and I think we are our deeds, so if we just get our heads out of the sand and just get on with it without expecting anything in return we're going to have a whole lot of other people following us like if you're out with your mates on that Saturday night and you know you have a few drinks or whatever you're doing and you start talking about hey I'm part of this group we're going to go and pick out rubbish on Saturday you want to come with us, become part of the collective.

For me, I talk to my Ph.D. students. I'm like, oh what are you doing on Saturday, why don't you come with me to meet this family. Take people along the journey with you and this is how I think we will all progress forward and we won't be tokens anymore Sikhs are not tokens anymore you know. Senegal is actually in the top five most common names in New Zealand of children being born. Can you believe that children are being born in New Zealand so we're talking about Australia? that New Zealand's not that far behind. We're not tokens anymore; we're just going to take people along for the ride both Sikhs and non-Sikh we should be leading it though.

**Gurmesh Singh**

I think also modern sewa look very different as we've spoken about and it's about having the ideas and you know sharing those ideas of ways that you can help novel ideas so 20 years ago an organization like this probably wouldn't have existed because the framework wasn't there, probably the mentality of the people wasn't there, whereas nowadays you know we can have a room like this and we can get together and share ideas and get an outcome from it.

**Preety Bains**

That was amazing. I'm shocked, I don't even know what to ask next, I guess my question for you Gurmesh is from as a member of parliament. I would want to pick your brain because I want answers for the next part of the session today. What do you think some of these policies would look like if we're creating a globe like a community change and a shift in our mindset towards government policies or government or community?

**Gurmesh Singh**

From a government point of view things must be easy, so our keynote speaker today spoke about some of the challenges of setting up businesses in Australia and those challenges are there but those challenges also exist for volunteer organizations as well there's red tape and all these other ridiculous things you have to go through just to sometimes do volunteer work so as a government clears those obstacles but people sometimes have a skewed idea of what government is or should be and they expect the government to be a nearly god-like figure that can come along and fix every plot every problem but it's not what government is in the Australian system.

Ultimately, we're here to serve the people and often people do a better job solving their problems, with government nudges rather than a government trying to come in and over the top and telling you exactly what to do so how we would relate that to sewa is that we need to facilitate better outcomes of sewa so if we can magnify for instance and someone sewa a good example of that is for instance you know things like the rural fire service they are a volunteer organization originally started by farmers to protect them and their neighboring properties over the years given you know more and more funding from the government to help amplify that you know that volunteer ethos which now as we saw over this summer without those volunteer firefighters would have been in a lot more strife. So, from a government point of view, that's what can be done but from a community point of view you mentioned it earlier it's about bringing your friends along for that journey. So, if you are going to do something, set something up to help someone if you take some people with you then next time, they might take three more people with them next time as well so it's amplifying that effect.

### **Preety Bains**

Great just before we get to questions to the audience I just had one last question if we strip it back to grassroots what do you think that we need to start doing in the gurdwaras because that's really where sewa was developed, what do you think our gurdwaras should be telling our community as well because they're a really important part in this as well.

### **Dr. Malvinder Bains**

That's an excellent question look our gurdwaras are our safe space they're our space to learn there are space to nurture and the face of the good water has also changed over the years and we're part of that change I came up with this crazy idea at the time that it would be cool to take human brain specimens into a gurdwara and because I wanted to do some sewa, I wanted to teach kids in these Sunday school you know how they have those kids school's program and they go and learn good rookie and stuff, I wanted to show them what the brain looks like because want to get more kids excited about science. I didn't realize I'm going to have to have a conversation with the [22:23inaudible] about bringing human remains into the Gurdwara and what that means the challenges associated with that.

I'm so glad I did it because now this is part of my almost internal curriculum I put myself forward and not just me I bring other youngsters along for the ride and I do little sessions about how to look after your brain in the gurdwara and it's done in both Punjabi and English and for me, this came out of conversations from our community saying hey okay you do your stuff in the lab but we need more people like you to join you and it's very hard to get. Okay, we've already talked about a lack of women in color in the professional world right, think about getting more sick women into science like what is exciting about that how are we going to get more of them there so my thing was started from kids and I ended up going into the gurdwaras because I know these people are never going to come and visit me at the University of Auckland they're not going to come into my space you're not going to see aunties and suits with their shoes coming in and visiting me right they're not you know close to issues of labs you know all these things that you need to worry about.

They're not going to come and visit me so I have to go to them and for me, this became one of the most rewarding parts of my career and then it expanded to teaching older people about dementia. Dementia is a huge problem in our community on both my maternal and paternal sides of the family, I've got a history of dementia and I'm sure most of you have been touched by it in some way so I started going in and talking about the lungo that you're eating is high in cholesterol and sugar should you are having it every day? How can we change lungo, how can we change lungo to reflect our diet that we should be having, and you know this has been doing with my molecules in the lab right so I think when you discover that there are certain skill sets that you have that you can apply to the gurdwara setting it's a teaching resource. We were talking about this yesterday if you've got a finance background how many people would benefit from hearing about how to take out a mortgage? Going into the gurdwaras and teaching people how to open a savings account, how to save, what is the best interest rate for you? I don't know any of this stuff, if I could get this info from the gurdwara, I'd be rich.

### **Preety Bains**

That was incredible and I'm sure we have lots of questions from the audience.

### **Speaker 1**

This is one for Gurmesh, I guess when you look at some of the other countries you know Sikh people are doing an amazing job in progressing in advocacy into politics, I feel like the Sikh community in Australia seems to be on the brink of making it to that top-level there's a lot of influences that are in that space they're keen to get your thoughts on, what inspired you to get involved and what can people against the young Sikh professionals rising how can they get involved in the political space?

### **Gurmesh Singh**

Thanks for the question, so what inspired me I as a background of what I did first about union work, I studied industrial design and I worked in advertising and communications for 10 or so years and after that I had a career change and went farming and I was a chairman of a blueberry cooperative in Morgue and I mean quite a substantial size, this year they'll be turning over about 180 million dollars in a town of five or six thousand people so it's the biggest business in town and from an advocacy point of view I had a constituency being the farmers and I represented them to the management and I got basically involved in politics by sitting on an advisory panel for a minister and I got on that panel by attending an event that he was hosting on a Saturday night three years before I actually got appointed because I had this kind of philosophy where I said no to a few things and missed out on some opportunities earlier in my career and I thought well I'm not going to say no I'll go, it's a pain in the ass you know, it's a night kind of thing but I'll go and I went and then I think of that as the thing that got the ball rolling you know five or six years ago to where I am now so I have this philosophy, if you can say yes, turn up the things and go to things.

One of the things that when I spoke at my first YSPN event in Brisbane was why I asked the audience again what other professional groups are you a part of, so if you're in the finance industry it's very important to get to know other people in finance not just Sikhs in finance and one of the best ways of doing that is by attending industry events and I was perhaps

fortunate that I started my career in advertising which is a very social industry anyway, but you know it's important for people to get out there sell themselves, know what's out there and become known as a person not just as what your identity is. So you know sell yourself as your unique skill set, I think Australia you know we heard in the keynote, we heard from in the last panel as well we do face challenges here, I can't remember whom it was that said, I don't invest with people like you, well those people exist in Australia who aren't going to look at people based on who they are but you need to bust through that barrier and the best way of doing that is by getting out there and getting known. I'm sorry, what was the second part of your question?

### **Speaker 1**

I think that was the main part, the second part was how can people get involved which I think you've sort of part.

### **Gurmesh Singh**

So in terms of getting involved at a political level, it's important to join a branch I suppose of a party whatever persuasion you might be because you'd be surprised that the level of access that that gives you to you know sitting members and ministers and that sort of stuff. Politics like Australia is not like what it is in India where you see even the lowliest of low politicians has a police escort and all this kind of stuff, it's completely different here you can wander the streets and do whatever you like and then no one knows or cares who you are so I guess here it's also different we're a mid-level public servant is probably the equivalent to what a backbench MP is so you know it's also important to maintain that perspective.

### **Speaker 2**

My question is for Dr. Bains you mentioned that we're not tokens anymore, Sikhs are not tokens. I did like the point that group, I think raised earlier about getting out of it, getting out into different aspects of the community that are not you know traditionally or our space. How do you balance showcasing what your background is, your ethnicity is what your cultural values are, you know being altruistic and all those things about doing sewa, but also maintaining your personality as like in our contemporary society, like how do you balance the two and how do you just not make it look like you're volunteering but take it to that level of sewa like what's the difference between the two.

### **Dr. Malvinder Bains**

Wow, look I honestly didn't think that I was doing anything different I thought my actions were based on what people were asking me to do based on my skillset, not because I'm ethnic or because I'm a woman or because I'm a Sikh, I think my name gave it away with being identified by the Sikh community for doing what I felt like was my obligation and I love the fact that Sikhs are celebrating the leaders or the people at the forefront of whatever field they're in excelling and performing sewa at the same time but I don't think I ever sort of set out to be this way I'm a third-generation kiwi and for me I grew up not even being able to speak Punjabi and in terms of my professional outlook on things I didn't realize that there were other Indians like me until I reached university and so I think that sense of belonging and being associated with a group sort of came out as a byproduct of

just what I was doing not as a byproduct of who I am and this is why I was kind of talking about the fact that we're not tokens anymore, we have been educated by Sikkim, so we are learners we're not an exclusive group that is completely novel anymore but we have an amazing outlook on things based on what our Guru's went through and perhaps our form of sewa or our concept of service is really just within us and we don't even need to talk about it in this way, I think the community brought me up this way to be honest.

I was a kiwi first and I think you know Sikh is a way of life, it's not going to be the one thing that that makes us who we are, we have so many different dimensions and in terms of how we perform our sewa right we've got it in us already and it's just coming it's just oozing out of us and so I hope that sort of answers your question it's a difficult one because you're kind of asking how do we separate our professional sewa through from our identity of what sewa is, it's actually a very complex question I'm happy to talk to you more about it afterwards I think that's a new, that's actually a very interesting discussion.

### **Gurmesh Singh**

It's not as fun when both the panelists agree right when you first asked the question, I was asking myself this question, I think it's a question we all need to ask ourselves, is it should it matter that you're doing the sewa, I think what matters is the sewa itself, the fact that you're doing it, I guess it might help facilitate it, it might help start it, it might help amplify it but what's more important is, it's what's come from in here and your actual outcome of the sewa as well.

### **Preety Bains**

Do we have any more questions, just one more question? Thank you both for your time appreciated it but a really interesting session I have a very quick question and it might be a nice one to end on, but you remember you had I suppose you found your sewa avenue through your work and something that you're passionate about and grimaced I think you as well kind of discovered it through almost by accident or evolution through things that you were involved in my observation is that it's much easier to maintain sewa if you're passionate about the sewa do you have any tips for finding the right sewa for you and finding that passion.

### **Gurmesh Singh**

Yeah, that's a great way of putting it I'll give an example, I'm not sure if many of you have been there but there used to be a restaurant across the road from the gurdwara and a few people there decided look we want to make a Sikh museum and basically out of a labor of love sewa they to a few volunteers a whole community of volunteers that are probably half a dozen of them spent a few months converting this space into a museum and I don't think either of them ever thought of it as work because they loved doing it and it was a they it shows when you go in there that this is something that has been built with love and has been built for the community by the community as a passion like a project no one could have told them hey, you need to build a museum it came from within it came from a desire within to build it and I think it's important that every single person in this room will have different areas of their life and of their expertise that will that they're willing to give out more freely because they enjoy doing it you know there's people who love mild and would love to be a treasurer of some organization there are other people who could think

of nothing worse so it's important for every person individually you know one of my favorite things I like doing which I don't get much time to do anymore is mowing the lawn because I just don't have the lot but you know for me to go and do that for someone else would be one way that I wouldn't mind doing it but I just you know it's a matter of finding the time, I'm doing other things but as an example you know that's something that I could do Dr. Bains has found something that she loves doing that doesn't feel like work it doesn't feel like work so that's I think another important aspect of sewa is that it's not work.

### **Dr. Malvinder Bains**

I don't have a lot to add I would just say that you know everyone's going to have a different calling and that calling might be to do something for one person it might be to do something for 10 people it might be to change the world right and we're all going to hear that call a little bit differently and that doesn't mean your sewa is any more or less important than somebody else's passion is definitely a driver for sewa I would find it really difficult to give advice about how to set up a mortgage and I find it super-duper difficult to teach someone how to code right but these are simple things that someone in this audience already has within them that they can share with somebody else for free this is the other thing right server is free so you have to put the time aside to be able to do it and how do you do that it's got to be something you're passionate about and we can all do it and it's just been such a pleasure to be able to talk about this in such a platform thank you all so much for this opportunity really.

### **Gurmesh Singh**

Around time like these days looking around this room and everyone's got more than enough money to survive but what most of us don't have is time and to be able to donate that time out of what you might consider downtime is actually very challenging and it's becoming more and more so as our working lives kind of have long ago descended past 5 p.m. but most of us work weekends even if it means checking emails for a few hours and that will be the biggest challenge of sewa in the modern era is where do we find the time to meaningfully give out freely oh well that's kind of so the question was, what do you say to people who are too busy okay so you know in the section of your CV that has you know volunteering or service commitments right a lot of people don't put much in there right because they don't feel the need to because that's not really a skill they need for that particular job unbelievably the service component of my CV is probably going to be the reason why I get a promotion faster than my colleagues.

We don't talk about sewa in terms of how it can benefit the person doing the service I think people will make time when they realize that karma does come back and there's no real excuse to not be able to donate time to perform sewa, nobody is that busy to help that person across the road and nobody's that busy to donate a little bit of their time to share their skills with another person and I challenge you all to find somebody who's that damn busy even our prime minister of just the Darden next time to perform sewa and she gets noticed for doing it.

She's not doing it for her global profile it's just somebody that recognizes that she's doing it so we've got a lot to do and we need to take people along for this ride but honestly you

can you can use it to your advantage this is probably why I was brought here is because you know my sewa got noticed right so I think we just need to get out of that mindset of sewa is something that's separate from my life sewa is part of my life and then this is how my career will also move forward we don't think about it in that context either there's also there's like a strong body of work to suggest you know how we live our lives has changed a lot over the last few hundred years with industrialization most of us recognize that to live a meaningful life you know money and work is a big part of it family is a huge part of it and increasingly that's why we have terms like work life balance and family life balance but I think there's a third crucial component missing from living a meaningful life that people don't discuss and that's community how do you develop the community and interact with your community, when I lived in Sydney I lived in Cogura in south eastern Sydney we did not know our neighbors who lived there for a year and a half we did not know what they looked like we couldn't have picked them up out of a lineup and I think that's quite sad that living in an apartment literally next door to someone and have never seen what they look like and I think that's a bad reflection on the way our society could be going but it's important that that third pillar of having and living a meaningful life is where sewa comes into it and it's important that we recognize the importance of that energy outside of our lives.

### **Preety Bains**

We have time for one last talking question, more than a question, it was just a very quick story that is extremely relevant.

### **Speaker 2**

I was telling dad on the way here this morning and he said this is perfect for you guys, last night I was having dinner with a girlfriend of mine and she and her husband are both volunteers for the sewa and they were there fighting on alliance and also doing a lot of the aftermath and the cleanup and I was having dinner with her and her two kids we went to high school together in blackwood in Adelaide and she used to drag me along to Christian fellowship on the Friday because she's very white Anglo-Saxon staunch Christian and that's where her and her husband met and every Friday they used to go for Christian their whatever church going and their Sunday schooling and very into the youth of the Christian school and stuff like that and we were talking about what was happening on with the bushfires and stuff and one of the things that we started talking about Sunday, I said there's plenty of churches around here in Melbourne beautiful ones and she said we don't go to church anymore and I said why and she said because once we joined the sewa and we started volunteering with the sewa we realized that the church was all talk they've no longer part of that faith even though it was a huge part of their life because church is just politics and nonsense and all talk, they talk about what we should be doing whereas the sewa and the family that has created around them does it and she said Jamil your community is totally different we're there on the front lines they're right behind us with the bottles of water and food and feeding us right there and then serve us in our DNA serving eternally without acknowledgement it's part of who we are, and thank you very much for your talk today and I'm sorry.

I have a fantastic question to ask you at the end of that but I thought it was extremely relevant that our community and our culture and our religion is that sewa it's we're not

just talk we are living proof of that one of the other things I wanted to mention was as a mum I've got my daughter turns 18 next week my son's 18 and I've made sure I encourage them with all of their servants when Sahil's 16 she's extremely passionate about animals and we both joined the RSCPA and we foster certified foster caregivers with the RSCPA and we're on a roster to go down to bands dale and work for a couple of days as volunteers to help with all the animals that have been burnt and lost and become orphaned in the fires both the kids are first aid they both have their first aid certificates they both have their working with children's you can get your kid involved in all sorts of sewa that are going to help and the reason she got her working with children's check is because she goes in nannies for the kids next door just so then there's no issues because there is a lot of licensing and policies around this sort of stuff so make sure you encourage your kids as well to get involved and support them through that journey.

**Preety Bains**

I think that's the end of that panel and I liked where that went for me I think that was an engaging conversation and to say that you know it is really part of our DNA and it's a way of living and we don't need to separate this concept are we already doing it we just need to come on board and do it as a community and create a collaborative approach to it to solve some of these problems that we'll be talking about later in the day so I just like the fact both of you we've got some small tokens of appreciation for you, okay all right.