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Message from the Vice-Chancellor University of Kelaniya Senior Professor Nilanthi de Silva

The University of Kelaniya strives to provide as much support as possible to all students who have any form of disability, in line with its policy of inclusivity. The University's Coordinating Centre for Students with Disabilities (CCSD) is the central coordinating body that offers support to students with special needs. This support takes the form of relevant and timely advice and guidance, as well as medical, psychosocial and academic support to promote individual growth and independence. The Centre encourages diversity, equal and equitable participation in all aspects of university life, by decreasing barriers and promoting inclusion.

At present, the University has about 60 students with varying degrees of disabilities such as impairment in vision, hearing, or speech, limited manual skills, limited mobility in addition to those with hidden disabilities. We acknowledge with much gratitude, the contributions made on numerous occasions by KUAA Australia in the past to support students with special needs. We are very happy to hear that once again, KUAA-Australia has come forward to raise funds to assist needy students. Your effort and interest in hosting a fundraising event during the upcoming Sinhala - Tamil New Year festival season to support students with disabilities at your alma mater is much appreciated. Your donations will be fully utilised to purchase medical and psychosocial support and specialist assessments and equipment to meet the study needs of our students with special needs.

Your support is invaluable and helps us to expand our services and our CCSD mission. We wish you all the very best and success!

Senior Professor Nilanthi de Silva
Vice-Chancellor
University of Kelaniya



Message from the President Kelaniya University Alumni Association Australia Dayananda Wimalasiri Liyanaarachchige

It is the month of April, the season of prosperity and new beginnings for Sri Lankans. The delightful season when the flowers bloom and fruits ripen - the time when hearts are filled with joy, friendships are renewed and all roads lead home.

The New Year, which approaches with the annual transition of the Sun, is a time when Sri Lankans celebrate the timeless link between the environment, nature and man. After reaping the harvest and offering the first portion to the deities, we celebrate our collective gains ushering in a period of joy, togetherness and love.

As Sri Lankans living in Australia, KUAA takes pride in celebrating the Sinhala and Hindu New Year, a precious occasion for us to rejoice our cultural identity. It is an opportunity to show our children their inseparable connection to a proud cultural heritage and the unique story of a beautiful nation, its people and traditions.

On this precious occasion, I do hope that you will reflect on the deep meanings of Sinhala and Hindu Aluth Avuruddha. The values of respecting each other, social obligations, reconciliation and harmony are priceless virtues that build any society and things that our elders have amply demonstrated for centuries. As the president of our association, I take pride in being a part of our loving and caring community and would like to thank you for being a valuable member. It is our platform of friendship, togetherness and unity. It is your home away from home, where you can feel belonged and secure.

Enjoy KUAA අපේ අවුරුදු 2021 and I wish you a blissful and a bountiful New Year.

Dayananda Wimalasiri Liyanaarachchige
President
Kelaniya University Alumni Association in Australia



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SUMMER SUNDAY

28 February 2021
Ian Cowie Recreation Reserve
Rockbank

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Another highlight in the first quarter of 2021 was the Summer Sunday Event that was held in Rockbank. The cricket match held during the day brought in yet another massive win for KUAA Australia against the Western Lions Cricket Club. Moreover, it was a great opportunity to spend the day with our friends from the West and North of Melbourne.



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CREATIVITY CHALLENGE FOR KUAA CHILDREN

During Melbourne's COVID Lockdown

Creativity challenge for KUAA Children during Melbourne's Covid Lockdown - Parallel to the quiz for adults, KUAA children participated in a creativity challenge and won gift cards. Children's submissions included beautiful artwork, videos of playing musical instruments and origami. We have included some artwork shared by KUAA Children below



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Thirandi
14 years



Nevindu
8 years



Disara
11 years



Disara
11 years



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Australia Day Celebrations 26 January 2021 Knox Garden Reserves, Wantirna South

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Kelaniya University Alumni Association in Australia (KUAA Australia) secured a comfortable win against Peradeniya University Alumni Association (PUAAVic) in the 11th annual cricket encounter held at Knox Gardens Cricket Club in Wantirna South on the Australia Day 2021. This was a massive come back to the KUAA team after losing to PUAAVic for three consecutive years. KUAA fought back in style while PUAA players struggled to put a decent score on the board. With many young players infusing new energy to the team, KUAA's performance at both bat and ball was nothing short of brilliance.





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Annual General Meeting 2019

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Online Quizzes during Covid Lockdown



KUAA Australia organised online quizzes during Covid-19 lockdowns in Melbourne in early 2021. KUAA members were asked to share answers to questions posted on KUAA Facebook Group and the winners received pizzas delivered to their homes..



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COVID - 19 OUR RESPONSE

BY Shashike Gamage

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DRY FOOD DONATION

As COVID-19 continued to shut economies, push people into isolation and create uncertainty and greater vulnerability, KUAA rallied together with a number of other organisations to support the most severely affected members of our community - the international students. There are about 14,000 Sri Lankan students studying in Australia out of which over 10,000 stay in Melbourne. Most of these students lost their supplementary income sources due to the pandemic and found it extremely hard to make ends meet.

As more and more people entered into mandatory self-isolation, KUAA stepped in to provide help to those students who do not have the support of an income or a network of family and friends. KUAA coordinated with the Sri Lankan Consulate in Victoria, Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery and Aus News Lanka in this effort. Hundreds of KUAA volunteers are contributing their time, resources and labour into this ongoing process as the lockdown and restrictions continue to be enforced.

KUAA focused on two key areas so to help students to cope with the difficulties posed by the disruptions and consequent financial hardships. These included:

- Distributing essential food supplies;
- Coordinating free professional support through medical practitioners, lawyers and accountants

KUAA Coordinated the preparation and home delivery of more than 900 dry food packages to students and their families.

KUAA publicised the availability of support to students on numerous communication platforms including Aus News Lanka Facebook Page. Sri Lankan Consular Office in Melbourne received calls and emails from students who requested food packages and the information was passed on the KUAA Emergency Response Team. In most cases, these packages were delivered on the same day.

KUAA managed the delivery of around 50-100 food packages per week. The package included enough dry rations for a week's period. In some instances, more than one package was delivered to students who live in shared accommodation facilities.



FREE PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Having spoken to the students, KUAA also started a process through which students can receive free professional advice for a period of two months on a number of key services. Many Sri Lankan doctors, accountants and lawyers joined hands with KUAA to offer free services to students in the following areas:

- Medical advice and support;
- Visa related issues; and
- Superannuation and taxation.

By the end of April, nearly 15 students benefitted from these services. Most students sought support for withdrawing their superannuation funds and questions around their visa status.

The students welcomed this support, as they were unable to return to Sri Lanka or receive money from families back home who are equally affected.

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to all the kind and generous people of the KUAA membership and the public, who financially contributed to this initiative. Many others have also supported us by donating their time, resources and labour to make this effort a success. The significant volume of kindness and generosity that we have seen in these trying times has been a true testimony of the true Sri Lankan values of care and pure will, and we are immensely thankful to all those who chose to be a part of this effort.

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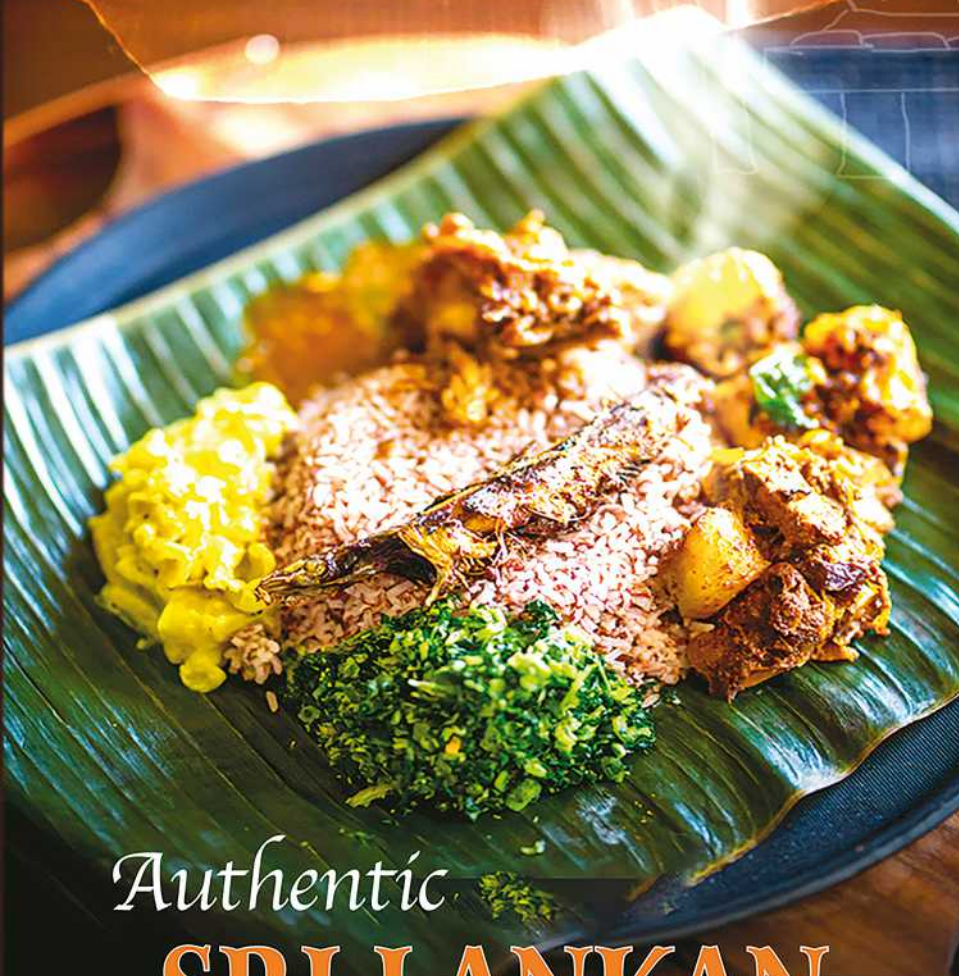
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Learning Opportunities | 19 during Covid 19

In an effort to maximise learning opportunities during Covid-19 restrictions, KUAA Australia launched a series of webinars in January 2021. The topic for each webinar was selected based on the popular demand of KUAA members. In the first quarter of 2021, KUAA conducted two webinars, which attracted more than 200 people. These webinars were open to the public and participants from both in and out of Australia joined in.

The first webinar focused on Australian permanent residency visa pathways and the second webinar discussed how to prepare for Australian job market as an overseas qualified professional. The recordings of both webinars are available on KUAA Australia Facebook Page: facebook.com/kuaa.australia or on our website kuaa.com.au





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