

Journey Beyond Fear

Jade Jungwirth

To coincide with Refugee Week, the Rural Australians for Refugees Castlemaine and Theatre Royal are hosting a special screening of Journey Beyond Fear at 7pm on Tuesday, June 17.

An inspirational film, told through the eyes of a teenage girl (Zahra) and her Afghan refugee family in Malaysia as they wait for, and eventually achieve, resettlement in Australia.

Journey Beyond Fear is an emotional roller coaster that takes viewers from despair, to joy, through hope, humour and love - shattering prevailing stereotypes.

A character driven film, featuring three magnetic daughters, and shot over seven years in Malaysia and Australia, it's an extraordinary tale that is as much a story of love as it is persecution.

Zahra's parents, both orphans in Afghanistan, fled to Iran to continue their forbidden love for each other where Zahra and her two sisters are born. Here, they suffer persecution and witness severe brutality towards Afghan refugees. The children are not permitted to attend school and the family is in constant fear of being deported to Afghanistan. After 12 years, they escape to Malaysia where they register as UN refugees and await resettlement a process that takes seven years!

Directed and produced by Robyn Hughan, with her husband Steve Warne as co-producer, Robyn first met Zahra and her family in 2011. She

spent the next seven years visiting the family, capturing their magnetic appeal and bringing their story to life.

"To this end, I made many self-funded trips to continue documenting the family in Kuala Lumpur," she said.

"At times this was very taxing, both financially and emotionally. I was often filming on my own, staying with the family and sleeping on the floor with them, which gave me incredible access to their world. I went through the ups and downs with them which allowed me to tell their story in a truthful and personal way.

"I had no idea what the final outcome would be and there was not a lot I could do to help," Robyn said.

"But eventually, they arrived in Melbourne under the UN program in 2014. I continued to film with the family here in Australia, and they are thriving. Zahra is a registered nurse, her sister is a personal carer and the youngest sister wants to be a lawyer.

"I was driven to tell their story to help people understand that refugees are no different to you, me or anyone else, something that is people need to understand more than ever."

Though there is a happy ending for Zahra and family, the film reminds views that less than one per cent of refugees registered with the UN are ever resettled.

Robyn and Steve will be at the Castlemaine screening and will be available for a Q&A at the end of the film.

For tickets visit theatreroyalcastlemaine.com.au/whats-on/journey-beyond-fear/



Zahra (right) and her two sisters.



Zahra's parents, both orphans in Afghanistan, fled to Iran to continue their forbidden love for each other and start their family.

Treaty Yarning Circle

Want to learn more about Treaty? Join staff and members of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria for a Treaty Yarning Circle!

Allies and community are invited to come along for a chance to yarn about Treaty, hear updates on our shared journey, ask questions and share some tea and a feed.

With Statewide Treaty negotiations underway, it's an exciting time to learn more and get involved! Castlemaine Bowls Club, 27 Berkeley Street, Castlemaine from 4pm to 6pm, Sunday, June 15. Visit www.eventbrite.com.au/e/treaty-yarning-circle-castlemaine-tickets-1381424611199 to register for this free event.

Co-op target hits \$760,000!

At the time of going to press the Castlemaine Community Investment Co-op's debenture campaign to buy the Hub for the community had reached \$760,750. That's 39% of the Co-op's goal.

The fundraising campaign runs until Sunday June 29, 2025 giving the Co-op 28 days to raise the \$1.95 million capital to purchase building which houses 17 community groups and small businesses with a focus on community and sustainability and bring it under community ownership. Both individuals and organisations can participate, with minimum investments starting at \$500 through to \$500,000.

To learn more about the offer visit the Co-op website www.castlemaine.coop



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Where on earth is Dave?

Morgan Reinwald

The Mail featured a 'My Community' profile of Dave Stephens in the April 18 edition of the paper. The article discussed his love of folk music, Bueno chocolate, and connecting with country. Yet, there was more to his story. Dave was about to embark on a journey across Australia by bicycle - from Wilson's Prom to Darwin - to raise money for endometriosis.

This is his second epic ride after cycling solo from Sydney to Perth in 2023 and raising \$5000 for the cause.

"It was just this quiet illness that I kept hearing about in these stories from people who were close to me... and it hadn't sort of entered the mainstream conversation with men," Dave said.

Thus far, Dave has raised \$3,114.78 on his travels and has a goal to reach \$5,000. Before he left he advised his only fear was wild dogs chasing him, and so begs the question - where is he right now?

Dave had phone signal on June 5 and contacted The Mail to advise he had crossed the border into the Northern Territory.

"I have been chased by a Maremma at Murray Bridge, but the dingoes are friendly and curious. A few camp fire visitations, but [they get] spooked away easily," Dave said.

"I keep finding pianos in tiny towns and pubs and ended up writing a little ditty that I've kept going on my mandolin - hoping to polish it up as I travel!"

Anyone wanting to support Dave's fundraiser to raise awareness for a condition that impacts one in seven Australian women can donate at www.endoaustraliafundraiser.org.au/overland.



Castlemaine's Dave Stephens set off on his latest journey in late April.



Dave is approximately halfway through his latest epic ride.

Operation Otto

On Tuesday, Castlemaine police assisted the Sheriff's office with Operation Otto, a joint effort focused on resolving long overdue unpaid fines in the community.

The operation was conducted with a focus on helping people clear their debts and avoid further consequences. Thanks to the teamwork of all involved approximately \$51,000 in outstanding fines was recovered.

While conducting the operation, police conducted approximately 300 breath tests and were pleased to report that there were no positive readings.

The police understand that times can be tough, and are always willing to work with the community not against it. This operation is about accountability not punishment and they thank everyone for their cooperation.



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