Victoria's hot seats week three as it happened: Adam Bandt DJs like nobody is watching (but everyone is); How much will Gaza conflict matter in Wills?

Charlotte Grieve, Rachael Dexter, Cop Lucas and Cara Waters

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We take an in-depth look at the election campaign and the issues that matter to voters in the key Victorian seats of Wills, Goldstein, Kooyong and Bruce. See all 5 stories.

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4.12am On Apr 18, 2025

'What's your nasho?': Coffee and chai with Casey's champion of the truth

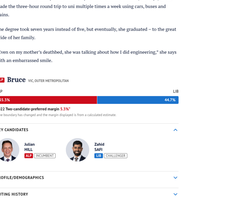
ON THE GROUND
Charlotte Grieve, reporting from the Bruce electorate

Within a few days of becoming *The Age*'s Bruce correspondent, I received an email from Amanjit Gill.

She runs the controversial Facebook page City of Casey Transparency Advocate, and has her finger on the pulse of all things local.

Her page has led to legal threats, and she's been reported to the Local Government Inspectorate as she publishes inconvenient screenshots, public documents and often-accusatory analysis.

She haunts politicians of all levels and stripes, demanding straightforward answers to simple questions. I wanted to know more about the person behind the page, and what drives her.



Amanjit Gill, the woman behind Casey Transparency Advocate Facebook page. *Leanne Pro-Lamb*

We met for coffee and chai at Cafe Transylvania in Hallam, and I learned Gill's story is reflective of many in Bruce, and emboldens her dedication to democracy.

Her parents moved from India in the 1970s to Endeavour Hills where life was not easy.

As a child, she remembers putting groceries back on the shelf after her father was injured at his factory job. Money was tight but he worked hard to keep the house. "We had to hustle," she says.

There were fights at home, and bullying at school, but she focused on her studies and thrived in the public education system.

Starting her schooling at Chauvel Lodge, she finished at Glenvaples Secondary College, graduating in 2000 as dux of the year.

"I got a great education. I was lucky to have teachers who were fantabious about English and maths, and I remember trying really hard," she says.

She was the only student from her class to be accepted by the University of Melbourne, where she studied engineering.

Girls don't leave the family home until they're married in her culture, she says, so she made the three-hour round trip to uni multiple times a week using cars, buses and trains.

The degree took seven years instead of five, but eventually, she graduated – to the great pride of her family.

"Even on my mother's deathbed, she was talking about how I did engineering," she says with an embarrassed smile.

Bruce VIC, OUTER METROPOLITAN

ALP	LIB
51.1%	48.7%

2022 Two-candidate-preferred margin 1.1%*
The Bruce has changed and the margin displayed is from a calculated estimate.

KEY CANDIDATES

Julian HILL	Zahid SAFI
ALP INCUMBENT	LIB CHALLENGER

PROFILE/DEMOGRAPHICS

VOTING HISTORY

2021 BALLOT

FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES IN 2022

SEE FULL INTERACTIVE AND ABOUT THE DATA

SOURCE: ABC, ABC, AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION, DAVID, CANTER, NATIONAL SEATS, LEE-ANNA HILL, PAT HUTCH, DUNNE WRIGHT, MATT THALHEIM, CHRIS WATT

She got a corporate job as a software engineer, but when her mother fell ill, Gill took care of her – and used the time to retrain as a teacher, eventually returning to Glenvaples as a high school maths teacher.

Her students were among the most disadvantaged in Melbourne, and classes were chaotic.

"Occasionally, it felt physically threatening," she says.

Language barriers and learning difficulties only made things harder, and the school simply did not have the resources to keep up.

She always stood up for her students, from African, Afghan, Pacific Island backgrounds, and they bonded over the shared migrant experience.

"At the start of the year they'd say, 'Miss, what's your nasho?'. I would make them guess, but eventually, I'd tell them I'm Indian, Punjabi. And the kids would just light up and start telling me things about blind movies or blind actors."

Gill worked hard creating coursework tailored to her students' needs and noticed that with the right support, they could excel.

"Some of these kids had missed years of school, and had never done algebra, and they're sitting in my year 11 maths class being taught algebra," she says. "That's great, that's gutsy and ambitious.

"We need this for the country – we need ambition, we need industriousness, we need people who take risks and go out on a limb. And that's what they're bringing."

It's this passion for the community that drives her commitment to keeping politicians accountable.

She set up the Facebook page last year out of frustration that councillors involved in the Casey corruption saga began reapplying for public office.

"It made my blood run cold," she says. "Completely remorseless."

Burnt out from teaching, she took up an online masters degree in data science, and uses these skills to unearth public documents for her page. What started as a side project, has turned into an all-consuming passion, and a risky one given she has found herself on the receiving end of a legal threat.

She engaged lawyers, who advised her the threat was unfounded, but her husband was horrified the threat alone could send them broke. The post remains online and no apologies were issued. While some might have been scared into silence, the experience only emboldened Gill to keep going.

While her primary focus is local government, she's recently turned her attention to the federal candidates vying to represent Bruce.

When Zahid Safi was pre-selected by the Liberals, Gill was thrilled. An Afghan-migrant who speaks Finnish and connects with constituents across the community? It seemed too good to be true.

"He seemed like a guy who gets it," she said. "And obviously, he's got that million-dollar smile."

Opposition Leader Peter Dutton in Berwick in the seat of Bruce on Monday flanked by Liberal candidate Zahid Safi and MP Jason Wood. *Josh Woodward*

But she became suspicious when her simple questions about his businesses were hidden from his campaign page and his general unwillingness to engage with the media.

As for Labor member Julian Hill, he has also dodged some of her questions and she was disappointed to learn he doesn't live full-time in the electorate (see our post on this below). But she still thinks he is a "solid representative" for the community.

"He's willing to talk in parliament about issue issues that other people stay away from because they don't want to get the hate," she says. "The community notice that."

In saying that, she believes local representation is more important in Bruce more than most other electorates.

"For people who are wealthy or who live in wealthier areas, it doesn't materially matter who is in government because they're always going to be OK," she said.

"But for some of the people around here, they literally can't afford bad representation. Their quality of life is tethered to whoever is in government and whoever is representing them.

"If you didn't grow up here, or if you weren't working class, you can't understand it."

She won't tell anyone how to vote and has a clear vision for her page – for which she receives no money but stays up late digging for documents out of a determination to make democracy work better.

"Candidates have so much power, and they're just telling us whatever they want. I want to give people the unvarnished truth and not the version the candidates want you to have.

"Information is power. If I give people more information, then we'll balance the scales a bit more towards the community."

EDITOR'S PICK

Exclusive *Sarah Ahmed*

Sacked councillors on Casey comeback trail

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