

[Ganesha Temple Will Stay In Rural Southern Australia](#)

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Ganesha Temple Will Stay In Rural Southern Australia

Belle, Vadivella Carl

The location and suitability of the Ganesha Temple was the main topic on the agenda at the recent well-attended Annual General Meeting of the Hindu Society of South Australia. Many devotees felt that the temple - situated in the southern Adelaide suburb of Oaklands Park, a building once belonging to the Lutheran Church - no longer meets the needs of the expanding Hindu community.

The Ganesha Temple was opened in 1985, with the aim of providing a spiritual, educational and cultural focal point for all Hindus in South Australia, regardless of sectarian outlook. At that point the Hindu population in Adelaide consisted of about 150 families and between 50-80 overseas students enrolled in South Australia's universities. The Society launched an impressive array of activities, including language classes and the establishment of a library. In recent years the temple has engaged the services of a full time pujari. Discussion on what could have proved an emotionally charged topic was spirited, but amicable. The leading protagonist for the "relocation" group, Mr. M.B. Somers, a foundation member of the Society, claimed that the temple was now too small, that it was insecure, that it was physically remote and in some cases inaccessible to many of the Society's membership, that it could not easily be refurbished to meet the demands of the rapidly growing South Australian Hindu community. More importantly, it had none of the distinguishing features of a traditional Hindu temple. Somers felt that the temple should be "a prominent feature and landmark for...the Hindu community of South Australia for their identity...and achievements in the wider Australian community".

While many speakers were prepared to concede the validity of some of these arguments, a number of those who opposed the motion felt in the uncertain economic climate, the price tag for relocation (estimated at \$A350,000) was excessive, and that the Society should thus concentrate upon redeveloping the

present temple to reflect the immediate requirements of the community. A motion along these lines was passed by the meeting.

The issue of expansion versus consolidation is typical of debates being conducted among immigrant Hindu communities within Australia. Hindus are anxious to preserve their religious identity and to ensure that a comprehensive cultural as well as spiritual legacy is bequeathed to future generations.

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