


Albury LibraryMuseum

Our Stories

Sandra Endresz

3 June 2026



An aerial photograph of Albury, Australia, taken at sunset. The city is spread across a valley, with a river winding through it. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the entire scene. In the foreground, there's a large green field, possibly a sports ground, and a river. The background shows rolling hills and more of the city's extent.

Albury LGA

- **Regional city (~56,000 people)**
- **NSW–Victoria border**
- **Major resettlement area since 2009**
- **Nepali = most spoken language after English**

RIMAL FAMILY



Lachi Rimal & Ganga Ram Rimal
लच्छी रिमाल गंगाराम रिमाल



Robina Rimal
रोबिना रिमाल

Rowena Rimal
रोविना रिमाल

Rahar Raj Rimal
रहर राज रिमाल



Radhika Rimal & Durga Rimal
राधिका रिमाल दुर्गा रिमाल

SAPKOTA FAMILY



Nar Maya Sapkota
नरमाया सापकोटा

Laxmi Sapkota
लक्ष्मी सापकोटा



Krishna Maya Sapkota
Khatiwada
कृष्णमाया सापकोटा खतिवडा
Hari Prasad Sapkota
हरिप्रसाद सापकोटा



Utam Sapkota
उत्तम सापकोटा



Govinda Sapkota
गोविन्द सकोटा

सापकोटा



Museum and Social History Collection

- First Nations peoples
- European colonial settlement
- Chinese, Lebanese and German migration towards the end of the colonial period
- Post World War Two European migration and Bonegilla Migrant Camp
- 2000s Regional Settlement Hub for families from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Bhutan and Sudan



Nepali-Speaking Bhutanese Refugee Community of Albury

- Expelled from Bhutan with the introduction of the One Nation, One People policy (1990s)
- Many spent 15+ years in Nepali refugee camps
- Approx. 1500 resettled in Albury from Nepali refugee camps since 2009
- Common for 3 generations of a family to settle together
- Each generation has unique experiences and needs





Our Stories Project...

- Various outreach programs had developed a strong connection between the LibraryMuseum and this community
- Identified as a priority development area for the museum
- Conserving the stories of the elder generation becoming increasingly urgent
- 2023 NSW Heritage Grant provided essential funds to deliver the initiative
- Outcomes:
 - I. Dedicated temporary exhibition Sept 2024 to March 2025
 - II. 8 x Oral history interviews, 3 x short documentary films
 - III. Collection – oral histories, films, objects and 28 photographs catalogued into the Museum and Social History collection
 - IV. Online exhibition



Cards, Mindful Mandalas and Coffee

LibraryMuseum

Mondays in NSW school terms, 10:30am-12:30pm

Lavington Library

Thursdays in NSW school terms, 10:30am-12:30pm



Beginnings...

- Partnered with the Albury-Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau
- Community Liaison engagement
- Project community meet and greet evening + translated guided tour
- Expressions of interest from families, followed by extended meeting
- Engagement of professional oral historian
- Engagement of other contractors: Film maker, designer and translator







Early Wins...

- Working with an established partner (VRB)
- Community member championing the project
- Community meet and greet
- Extended meeting with each family to consult and build our understanding of their experiences
- Local film maker with experience working with CALD communities

Challenges/learnings...

- Getting all parties in the same place at the same time
- Exhibition scope and community representation
- Internal staffing changes + community liaison relocating



People involved...

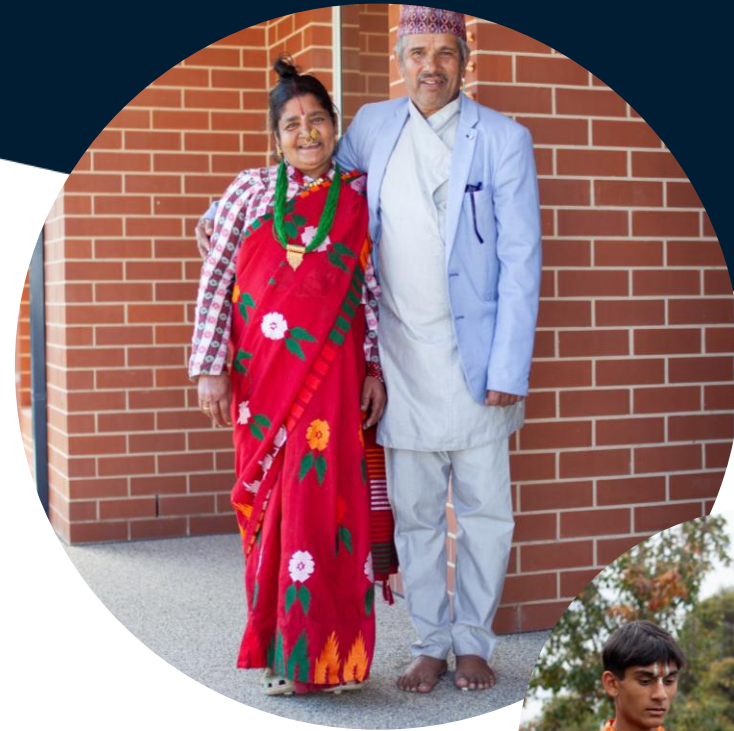
- Sara Korman (Coordinator Learning & Outreach) – visited interviewees homes with oral historian and filmmaker
- Narelle Drewe (Learning & Outreach Officer Community Engagement) – established strong links with the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community through multicultural programs
- Sandra Endresz (Museum Collections Officer) – curatorial support for the exhibition and managed incoming loans and donations of objects for display

Content Development...

- Interviews in family homes
- Filming of interviews
- Translation
- Film + oral history editing
- Exhibition design
- Family member review

Happy surprise...

- AI audio transcriber for English content





Content Development...

- English transcript editing (Sara, Narelle, Sandra)
- Themes chosen:
 - Beginnings: Life in Bhutan
 - Displacement: Leaving Bhutan
 - An Uncertain Future: Nepali Refugee Camps
 - A New Home: Arrival And Establishment in Australia
 - Looking Forward: Plans For the Future
- Excerpts from transcripts selected for theme panels



Accessibility measures...

- Listening station in exhibition
- Object labels in English & Nepali
- Names in English and Nepali
- Film subtitles in English & Nepali
- Implementation of the Pen-Friend for select oral history content





Rimal Family

Sapkota Family

Sapkota Family

Nar Maya

Hari + Krishna

Laxmi

Utam

Govinda

HOME >

हाम्रा कथाहरु
Our Stories



AlburyCity

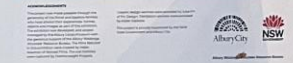


हाम्रा कथाहरु Our Stories

INTRODUCTION

हाम्रा कथाहरु Our Stories

Introduction text in Nepali and English describing the project's goals and the importance of sharing community stories.





AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT CHALLENGES

Text describing the challenges of refugee settlement, including the need for housing, employment, and social support. The text is arranged in columns with small images interspersed.

A NEW HOME

ARRIVAL AND SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Text describing the arrival and settlement process in Australia, including the challenges of finding housing, employment, and social support. The text is arranged in columns with small images interspersed.

LOOKING FORWARD

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Text describing the future planning process, including the challenges of finding housing, employment, and social support. The text is arranged in columns with small images interspersed.



DISPLACEMENT

LEAVING BHUTAN



The Bhutan for Me © Human Rights Foundation

"I couldn't remember all the things from Bhutan, but still I remember what my parents said to me. We stayed in India for a couple of days and then we went from there to the camp. In 1992, we settled in Malda camp with my sister. I had my two brothers, my mom and dad and my little sister. After arrival the (sister) passed away. Then after a year, we moved from there to the Bedding Camp and we settled there for twenty years."

Rudhira

"Now around that time in the beginning (early 1990s), it wasn't like it is now... you could say we were independent, we could wear the traditional clothes of our own culture, we Nepali people wore our traditional Nepali clothing, we also wore like religious symbol worn on forehead. From 1986 the government said that the people in Bhutan should have a single language (Dzongkha). When leaving Bhutan, there was lots of agitation, the government became a dictatorship, imposing the One Nation policy, and Nepali books were burnt. I had only heard of the agitation, and what had happened, but after I went back, they (the police) told me that people like us who wouldn't accept the new policies had to go away, since we lived in a remote area, we were not aware of this. Later, we left because they forced us to."

Even after them (the police) saying all of that, we were stubborn and didn't leave. I was the only Bhutanese citizen in our family, everyone else, my wife and all the children were not citizens. And then when they said to leave, we left on the 7th or 8th of April (1992), taking the children."

Ganga

"Another reason we left (When the Dzongde (district head) came around, we had to give two or three girls. And in that time, the grown-up girls used to live in the forest to protect themselves... Some of the women, they gave birth when they came to Nepal and they were pregnant back in Bhutan due to sexual harassment from the officer there."

Lachi

"Life was very tough, painful and emotional at the same time. I had days without food, clothes and shelter. I suffered from malnutrition and lot of children died..."

Durga

"It was one morning of April 1992. My mother lit the candle and left it inside our house. Likewise, dad let the cattle go away from the shed attached to our house. He then carried a wood box that could be filled with important documents, I guess, and started walking in silence but full of tears in his eyes. My mother was also carrying another wooden box and my baby sister on top of the box followed him and we other four children followed them. I still remember we walked continuously two days by forest, hills, grassland and finally reached the border of Bhutan and India."

After staying a few weeks there, we were placed in the open loading truck along with eleven other families and roughly more than fifty man/duties and their belongings. The journey was very hard and tough. After many hours of trip, which was fun to me as a child, but now I realize it was one of the hardest journeys in my life, we were brought to the stone part of Nepal in Morang district and the place was called Shanichhara, one of seven Bhutanese refugee camps, and they threw us there like garbage in an open space and left there."

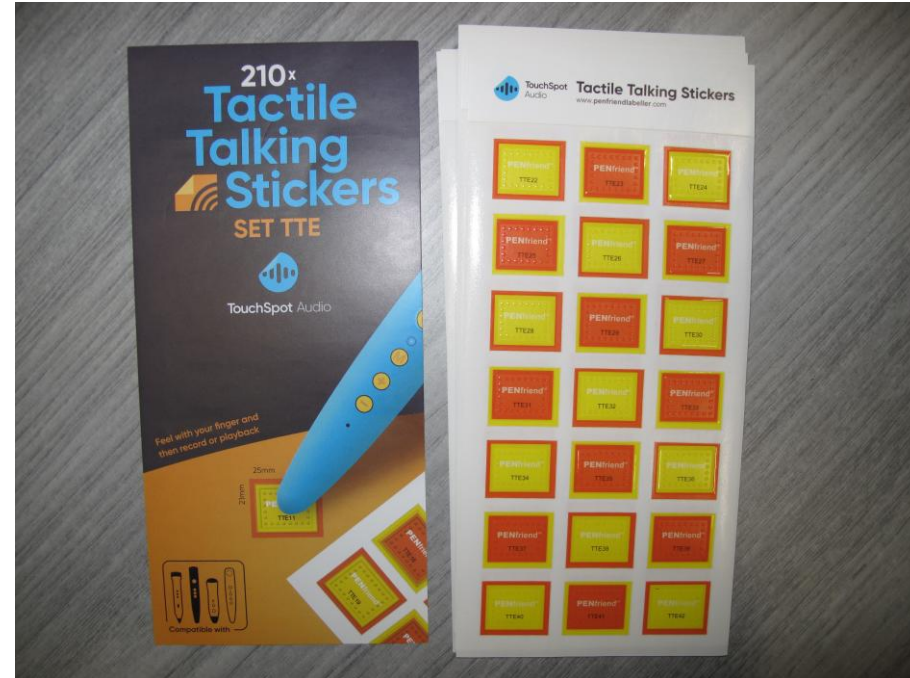
My parents somehow managed to find other people who were already settled there and begged help and built the temporary hut made of bamboo, thatch and plastic. We started living in there. Rain used to enter the house during rainy days, scorching the sun and cold and we survived twenty years."

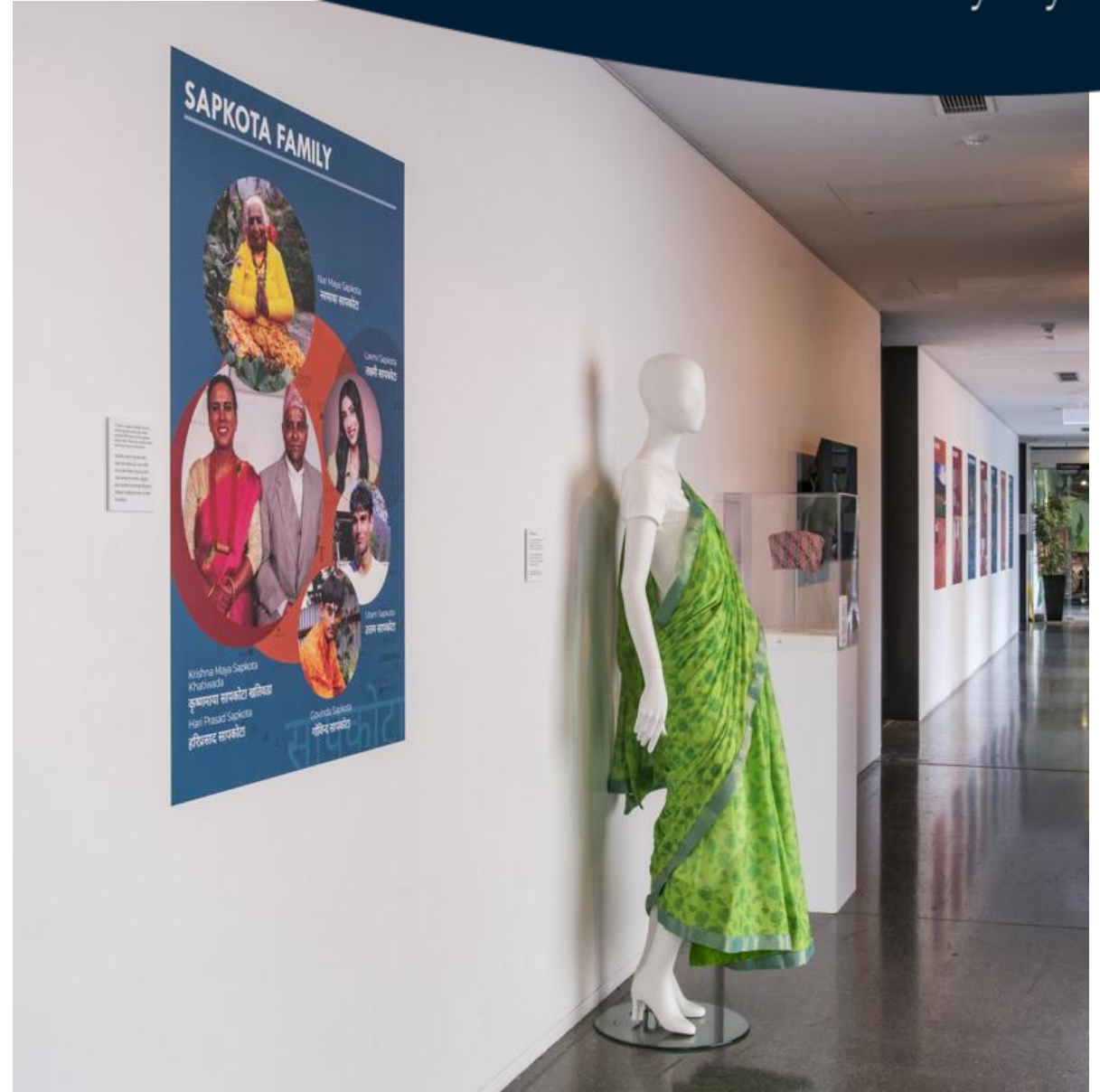
Life was very tough, painful and emotional at the same time. I had days without food, clothes and shelter. I suffered from malnutrition and lot of children died."

Durga

Accessibility...

PenFriend





A NEW HOME

ARRIVAL AND ESTABLISHMENT IN AUSTRALIA



Durga and Dushini in their family kitchen.

"Personally, I felt like I came to a different planet with new culture, new lifestyles, new people. We used to be very friendly with one another. We used to chat with neighbors and the community. But the people seem very isolated here. No one used to talk with us, other than the community members who often used to visit. And Raghika was already eight months pregnant ... but I left her alone in the unit after three days and started supporting other vulnerable community members, especially to bridge that language gap."

Durga

"My name is Rowena and I'm 13 years old and I was born in Australia. I feel my friends I was born in Australia and raised here and stuff but I tell them about how my background is Nepali and from Nepal and Bhutan. [...]"

"It makes me feel good that we didn't have to live like how they (parents and grandparents) lived back then and we have more privilege in Australia here. I liked how like both my parents even though they didn't have enough they were teachers and my dad was a principal though because they didn't have a lot growing up but they still achieved their dreams and they became teachers and became a principal (Durga)."

Rowena



Working Durga, Dushini, Durga, Dushini, Durga, Dushini, Durga, Dushini.

"My brothers, siblings, and maternal families, and family in law, and friends, they all decided to go to America, but I was thinking that we should go to Australia. At that time, I approached the UNHCR ... they told me that our whole family had to go to the USA, since most of our family, relatives and friends had already gone to the USA.

When I was first in Bhutan, I had worked with cows and horses and sheep that were brought from Australia, and for that I had training for fifteen days in Samchi, and from then I had always wondered how it was like to live in Australia.

After six months they called us again saying that our family was still to go to America ... and so I said that I would either go to Australia or stay in the refugee camp. After that they called me because the immigration team to go to Australia had arrived."

Ganga



Ganga in a garden.



Rowena playing sports in their common area.

"When I arrived, I wondered what there was to do, and what there was to see. I was isolated. When I looked over here, there was a road, and if I looked over there, there was the same road, and I was wondering where I was going. I got lost. When I looked at the people here, I had thought that they were my people ... I started getting used to living here and started forgetting about my life in the camp ... I went to TAFE, and also the gardens (in Thurgooona), the TAFE teacher Ruth took us to the gardens (community vegetable garden) and we played there, and the people from TAFE introduced us to people. The garden in Thurgooona is very good. First, we grew long beans, pumpkin, zucchini, coriander, cauliflower, asparagus, green vegetables. We used to even cook and eat there."

Lachi

"We arrived in Albury Airport on 8th of February at 4:25 p.m. And there were more than 150 people ready to welcome us like VIPs. There was a white looking lady who put khada (traditional scarf) on us and welcomed us. And there were a few other people such as the Bhutanese community who had already resettled.

One of these ladies said, "Sivagata cha" which means welcome. And it really inspired me. I feel that sense of belonging."

Durga

"He went to help other people. And he told me 'I will come soon'. But sometimes it took from 10 o'clock till 2 o'clock or 4 o'clock. And I needed to ring. I feel like, oh, where I am? I found it hard to stay behind at home on my own.

There was no one around except for one granny, my dad's cousin's auntie. And she came to my place. She helped a little bit and asked me to come and stay with her if I was alone. She's a lovely woman."

Radhika

"It was a totally hard time. I was missing my parents and my in-laws as well. Because we just came ourselves with three brothers in law. But I left my family. There was not any process for my parents when I came to Australia. My in-laws came after two months, but still I feel alone. I say, I have no one in here, no parents. Without parents, I feel so homesick. My Parents-in-law arrived in Australia on the 7th of April. And then on 14th of April, Rowena was born."

Radhika



A framed certificate or diploma.

LOOKING FORWARD

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE



Lachi and Nar Maya sitting together.

"I've been given all these opportunities and I've been given a choice as well. I get to choose what I want to do with my life, and I will use that choice and take my life forward and fulfill my goals and passions ..."

Lachi

"After a long time working in childcare, I got permanent job in 2009. I am still there so hopefully I'll be continuing. In my workplace there are lots of multicultural children having English as a second language (such as Chinese, Congolese, Bhutanese, Nepalese and Indian. I'm so happy to support them ... I'm really excited to work in this workplace, all the staff are multicultural, so supportive of each other and whenever we need help we talk with each other, support each other. It's so good to help and support the children in their day-to-day life."

Krishna

"I would really like to, even growing up in Australia, I would like to learn even more about my culture. When I learn more about my culture, I can say and express it to all the other people who are curious. That would be a good thing to have [.] I want to make sure that I preserve my culture and history and my parents' history. I want to communicate to, like, my family and others about our religion. So, I want to make sure that it's not lost just in between us."

Govinda

"In the refugee camp we were lacking so many resources and the world is full of resources, so it's actually ignited a passion in me to spread that word on how lives can be transformed as I experienced that as a young child. It's ignited a passion in me to advocate for children and spread the word that every child deserves an adequate standard of living, an adequate education, lifestyle.

Hopefully, in the refugee camp, if I get a chance to go back, do something at least for children, encourage to provide them with resources because just as my life changed coming to Australia, I know theirs will ... I've been given all these opportunities and I've been given a choice as well. I get to choose what I want to do with my life, and I will use that choice and take my life forward and fulfill my goals and passions."

"My aspirations would be to become a mathematician, but I also think it's important to keep my roots as well because obviously I've grown up with practicing my religion all my life, so it's always going to be part of me and I think I aspire to keep that going as well. After I finish uni, I'm thinking of searching for internships in that quantitative research, and through those I think I could seize opportunities and if I enjoy it, I could get into teaching as well.

[...] People who hear my story and all our stories should take away that family and heritage is important. We should keep traditions going that have been going for thousands of years and we should stay connected to our roots. I think, maybe in the future, I'd go back to Nepal. I do want to go back some time to visit the temples again."

Laxmi

Krishna

"I shower every day, and prayer in the morning, and I come and sit rice, and I walk around the garden ... I have already taught my family language, and household rules and customs, they already know about dharma (religion), I've already taught them everything."

Nar Maya



A person's hands holding green leaves.



A woman wearing a yellow and orange headscarf.



A young man looking forward.

[Leisure](#) > [Museum and libraries](#) > [Exhibitions](#)

Our Stories

Discover the remarkable stories of local Bhutanese families.



Online exhibition....

- Exhibition panels PDF
- Embedded films x 3
- 3D virtual tour
- Embedded audio oral history interviews x 8
- Downloadable transcripts

[Our Stories](#) >

In their own words, three generations of the Rimal and Sapkota families share their experiences of migration as Nepali speaking Bhutanese refugees. *Our Stories* features oral histories, photography, personal objects and documentary films in an open and heartfelt exploration of the remarkable journeys, culture and achievements of two families that call Albury home. This exhibition was on display at Albury LibraryMuseum from 7 September 2024 to 23

[Local Comm](#) >



LEARN NEPALI

Did you know that, according to Census data, Nepali is the second most spoken language in Albury? Here are some common words in English and Nepali that you may wish to learn:

- Hello - Namsate - नमस्ते
- Thank you - Dhanyavaad - धन्यवाद
- Please - Kripaya - कृपया
- Love - Pyar - प्यार
- Family - Pariwar - परिवार
- Goodbye - Namaskar - नमस्कार
- My name is... - Mero nam ho - मेरो नाम हो
- Delicious! - Swaadisht - स्वादिष्ट
- Yes - Ho - हो
- No - Hoina - होइन

नमस्ते



lane gallery >





Acknowledgements...

This project was made possible through the generosity of the Rimal and Sapkota families who have shared their experiences, homes, objects and images as part of this project.

This project was proudly supported by the NSW State Government.

Additional funding and in-kind support were provided by AlburyCity.

The exhibition was developed and project managed by the Albury LibraryMuseum with the generous support of the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau.

The films featured in this exhibition were created by Helen Newman of Nomad Films. The oral histories and photographs were captured by Featherweight Projects. Graphic design services were provided by Julia Fin of Fin Design. Translation services were provided by Kedar Sapkota.

Thank you...

More information:

<https://www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/leisure/museum-and-libraries/exhibitions/past/our-stories>

Questions?



हाम्रा कथाहरु
Our Stories