

Bashing victim rebuilds life in Dee Why as . . .

Bepin calls beaches home

Alice Marshall

BEPIN Shrestha – the young man who was bashed and left for dead on his way to work in Dee Why – has decided to stay in the suburb and rebuild his life.

On Sunday 20 people gathered for a barbecue at friend and carer Sarah Cook's home in Collaroy Plateau to wish Mr Shrestha well, with the next stage of his rehabilitation a move to a share house in Dee Why.

Ms Cook has housed Mr Shrestha since his release from Ryde Rehabilitation Centre three weeks ago, where he underwent intensive therapy and even learned to talk again after the bashing left him with facial fractures and extensive bleeding and swelling of his brain.

“Bepin's progress has been amazing – Sunday was a perfect afternoon,” Ms Cook said.

“He's moving in with another Nepalese student. I'll miss him but he's really excited about this next stage of his recovery.”

Mr Shrestha told *The Manly Daily* that he had been overwhelmed by the support he'd received.

“The community is very good here,” Mr Shrestha said. “I was shocked by the amount people donated and want to thank them very much. I didn't expect that much help..”

At the time of the attack, newspapers in India and his native Nepal linked the Dee Why bashing to a string of attacks on Indian nationals in Melbourne, reporting the attack on Mr Shrestha was racially motivated.

It is a sentiment Mr Shrestha strongly rebukes.

“Australia is a good country. It is not a racist country like a lot of those newspapers said – there are lots of good people here,” he said.

Ms Cook echoed the sentiment: “Everyone who came on Sunday had played some part in Bepin's rehabilitation and care and everyone pitched in and brought food or wine,” she said.

“It really made me stop and reflect on the fact we live in such a caring community here on the beaches.”

Despite his ordeal, Mr Shrestha still thinks Dee Why is the best place to live.

“Dee Why was the first beach I went to and I think it's the best beach and I like the people,” he said. “I'm feeling so much stronger, but I still have rehabilitation to do and need to rest.”



Above: Bepin with his father Bishnu. Inset: At Ryde rehab centre following the attack.

Pictures: VIRGINIA YOUNG and SIMON DEAN