



A: 1 Powerhouse Road, Casula NSW 2170 Australia

E: [contact@curiousworks.com.au](mailto:contact@curiousworks.com.au)

W: [www.curiousworks.com.au](http://www.curiousworks.com.au)

P: 61 2 9602 9568

## Varun Fernando ('Riz') – Biography

Playing the lead role in *Riz* was Varun's first experience in a feature film.

Born in Madras in the early '90s, Varun spent the first five years of his childhood sailing across the globe on a ship with his parents. His father worked for a British shipping company as a marine engineer.

On the ship he was homeschooled by his mother who is a teacher. The crew of different nationalities became his first family, so it became normal for him at an early age to grow up, live, eat and celebrate with people from a variety of different backgrounds.

He returned to India at the age of six for formal schooling, and quickly fell in love with Bollywood movies in a country where cinema is virtually a religion. When he was seven he rendered his grandmother speechless by declaring his life's aim was to become an actor (instead of the conventional Indian child's expected response of becoming an engineer or a doctor).

In 2002, Varun and his parents migrated to Sydney in search of a better future and a more secure family life where his father would no longer have to go away for eight months at a time on the ship. It was not easy for Varun settling into the new country, let alone a new school but migrating to Australia represented a closeness of family life he had never experienced before.

He soon immersed himself in school plays and creative pursuits as a way of making new friends.

Sadly in 2007, his father suddenly passed away. Varun was only 16 and tragedy left him and his mother devastated. Instead of returning to India, they decided to stay as Australia had already become 'home'.

Surrounded by supportive peers and a strong-willed mother, Varun plunged himself into drama and singing. This gave him a safe outlet to express himself honestly, while honing his creative skills.

He secured leading roles in high school musicals such as *How to Succeed in Business Without Even Trying* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Varun also began doing TV extra work around this time.

Apart from continuing his acting training, Varun is currently a student at Sydney's Macquarie University, pursuing a double degree in Psychology and Commerce.

While at university, he met, fell in love with and married an English backpacker, who has since migrated to Australia. Once again he saw cultures unite and stories shared under his home roof, just as it was on the ship in his childhood. These life experiences and many more greatly influenced Varun's portrayal of Riz's character.

*"What I loved the most about playing Riz is that I got to play the typical angst-filled teenager but additionally I got to portray the challenges that I experienced as a migrant to Australia, trying to stitch together the many identities I have had to juggle throughout my life. I liked that Riz's ethnicity was not the focus of the film. Instead I really related to his love for Australia and his struggle to find a harmonious blend of his past and present."*

*"I look forward to the Australian film industry showcasing more multicultural characters with untold stories that look at the new generation of Australia which is rich and diverse. I hope that in the future there are more ethnic characters who are featured on screen not because of type-casting but rather as genuine representations of contemporary Australian society."*