

Croatian Cultural Profile -older people

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to Croatian people originating from various regions of ex-Yugoslavia who live in Melbourne. This description may not apply to all people as individual experiences may vary. However this profile can be used as a guide to some of the issues that may concern your clients. We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Australian Croatian Community Services and Croatian Catholic Welfare Association in developing this profile. Information is also provided about relevant services & activities for older people.

Migration:

- Croatian migration began in the 1850s with some Croat sailors arriving at the goldfields of Victoria and NSW.
- There were two major waves of migration. The first occurred between 1950s & 1970s and the second wave began in the 1990s as a result of the recent wars in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina.
- Migrants were predominantly motivated to settle in Australia due to a combination of economic and political factors.
- The majority of migrants who arrived during the first wave, originated from rural regions and were mostly unskilled workers who lacked formal education.
- The new migrants, many of them refugees, who arrived in the 1990s, had completely different social backgrounds from the earlier migrants. These new migrants were mostly middle aged, married and predominantly professionals (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).
- The Victorian Croatian born community reflect an ageing profile, with 39.8% being 65 years and over.

Local Demographics: Croatian residents in the S.E. Region (ABS 2011)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
Total population of LGA	135,605	252,382	74,174
Total no. of residents born in Croatia	1,063	1,332	129
No. of Croatian born residents, 55 yrs +over	542	626	61
Total no. of Croatian speaking residents	920	1,479	150
No. Croatian speaking residents, 55 yrs + over	449	558	61

Language:

- Gaining accurate figures for the Croatian community in Australia is difficult because place of birth does not accurately reflect ethnicity.
- Many Croatians were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in other parts of former Yugoslavia and speak the local dialects.
- When booking an interpreter, it is culturally appropriate to request a Croatian born, Croatian speaking interpreter. This is an important consideration as many clients experienced war trauma and find it difficult to interact with people of other ethnicities from former Yugoslavia.
- The Latin alphabet is used by Croatians, in terms of a written language.
- Many elderly Croatians do not have good English proficiency and some have lost their ability to speak English due to dementia.

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Culture and Religion:

- Croatian traditions are based on Western society.
- Croats are proud of their culture and celebrate annually cultural, political, historical and religious events.
- It is common for Croats to kiss on both cheeks as part of a greeting.
- There are different types of cuisines originating from various regions of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- There is a strong correlation between religion, traditions and culture in the Croatian community, especially for the elderly.
- The majority of Croats are of Roman Catholic faith, the minority being Islamic, Seventh Day Adventist, Jewish and Serbian Orthodox.
- An important tradition of Catholic Croats is to abstain from meat every Friday, though custom is slowly diminishing.
- When a family member passes away, it is a custom for relatives to wear black clothing as a symbol of mourning.
- Mass, rosary beads and prayer books highlight the importance of faith in the Catholic Croat community.

Attitudes and issues with ageing:

- High respect for Croatian elderly who are seen as a knowledgeable source of information on culture, traditions, history, etc.
- Younger generations appreciate the dedication and commitment of the elderly in establishing Croatian clubs, churches and social groups in Australia.
- Expectation on family members to provide care
- Fear of loss of one's independence and self sufficiency
- Social stigma related to mental illness

Attitudes to professional care and services:

- Lack of understanding and awareness of Australia's structures and systems
- For professional care, Croats have a strong preference for ethno-specific aged care services
- Reluctance to seek assistance
- Reluctance to sign papers and forms
- Traditional attitude - professional care is a foreign concept, people are suspicious
- Modern attitude - receptive to professional care, needs to be culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Polite to shake hands and have a few minutes of courteous conversation, if visiting client
- Highly likely that client will offer HACC Assessment Officer food and drink
- Clients may feel that questions being asked are too personal and may feel uncomfortable about answering
- Try to structure questions to be non intrusive.

Health beliefs and practices:

- Traditionally doctors & general practitioners are well respected and given great authority.
- Croatian-born people may use alternative therapies alongside mainstream medical treatment.
- Herbal medicines may be used.
- Croatian-born people tend to openly discuss their physical ailments and health conditions.
- Preventive health actions are not widely adopted by the Croatian community.

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Health issues:

- Diabetes
 - High cholesterol
 - Excess weight
 - Mental illnesses (e.g. Schizophrenia, depression, post traumatic stress disorder & anxiety disorders)
- High blood pressure
Heart disease

Greetings: Note: Each letter in Croatian is pronounced as a singular sound.

English Greeting	Croatian Greeting	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Dobar dan	Dobar dan
Good Morning	Dobro jutro	Dobro yootro
Goodbye	Dovidjenja	Doveejenya
Yes	Da	Da
No	Ne	Ne
Thank you	Hvala	Hvala

Significant dates:

- Christmas is celebrated on 25th December
- Easter's date is to be confirmed each year

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Services & Activities useful for older Croatian people in Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.*

<p>Australian Croatian Community Services</p> <p>Main Office: 40 Pickett Street Footscray 3011 Ph: 9689 5811 Fax:9689 8419</p> <p>South/East Office: 128-130 Walker Street, Dandenong. 3175</p> <p>Contact Jordana Duddovic Ph: 9791 6000 Fax 9791 6011</p>	<p>Services provided in the South East:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned Activity Groups Tues & Fri • Casey Men's Outing Group - Mon • Community Home Care Packages • Croatian and English classes • Volunteer Program • Community Visitors Scheme • Healthy Ageing Program <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Croatian Catholic Welfare Association</p> <p>798/808 Springvale Rd Braeside Ph: 9701 6131 Is connected to the Croatian Catholic Church.</p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HACC Social Support /Friendly Visiting Program • Planned Activity groups – low level exercise group - Wed/Thurs • Information & Referral <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre</p> <p>Level 1 314 Thomas Street Dandenong 3175 Ph: 9767 1900 Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural PAGs core and high • Positive Ageing Programs- strength training, warm water exercise and tai chi • Outing Groups • Carer Support Program • Volunteer Visiting Program • Community Visitors Scheme • HACC Access and Support <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Croatian Senior Citizens Club (Braeside)</p> <p>798/808 Springvale Rd Braeside Ph: 9701 6131 or 9769 1966</p> <p>Contact: Steve Kovacic</p>	<p>Meets Thursdays 10.00 am – 2.00 pm Weekly meetings with lunch, activities and outings. Mass is celebrated at 11.00 am for interested people.</p>

***This resource list of services (other than Council HACC), has been prepared for aged care staff in the Council areas of Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia. Some services and activities listed are in fact available to residents beyond these three municipalities.**