

Chinese Speaking Cultural Profile –older people

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Chinese people who live in the South Eastern Region of 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 gratefully acknowledge the assistance and information provided by South Eastern Region Chinese Friendship Centre of Victoria and also information gathered from Home and Personal Care Kit: Cultural and Religious Profiles to Assist in Providing Culturally Sensitive Care and Effective Communication 2004 produced by Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne).

The profile also includes information about local services and activities relevant for older Chinese speaking people regardless of country of birth. This profile focuses on Chinese people born in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Introduction:

The Chinese usually identify themselves by ethnic origin instead of their nationality. A person is considered Chinese when he or she is of Chinese descent.

Chinese people are very diverse in their country of origins, their spoken language, religion, socio-economic status and cultural practice. For instance, the Chinese from Guangdong may speak the same dialect with the Chinese from Southeast Asia and mutually understand each other; however their religions, cultural practices or diet can vary due to local influences.

Migration

Chinese speaking people have migrated to Australia from many different countries.

The main countries are: Mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Migration from China:

- There is a long history of migration from China to Australia, going back several generations dating back to the 'Gold Rush' era.
- In 1973, the influx of Chinese immigrants increased rapidly due to the abolition of the Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia Policy).
- In 1976, an increasing number of elderly parents migrated to join their adult children, often to assist with grandchildren (Australian-Chinese Family Reunion Agreement).
- After 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Prime Minister Bob Hawke, granted students permanent settlement in Australia. Those students later invited their families to join them.

Migration from Hong Kong:

- After the White Australia Policy was officially abandoned, many came to Australia as students and chose to stay permanently.
- Prior to the transfer of Hong Kong from British administration to the People's Republic of China, many Hong Kong-born people uncertain about Hong Kong's economic and political future, chose to migrate to Australia.

Migration from Malaysia:

- In the post World War II period, Malaysian students including ethnic Chinese were given temporary residency under the Colombo Plan.
- Many ethnic Chinese from Malaysia also migrated to Australia after end of White Australia Policy in 1973.

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- The largest influx of Malaysia-born immigrants arrived in Australia after 1981, under the Family Reunion Program or as skilled or business migrants.

Migration from Singapore:

- Increasing numbers of students arrived in Australia after the relaxation of the White Australia Policy.

Migration from Vietnam:

- The first wave of arrivals of ethnic Chinese refugees from Vietnam was during the 1970s.
- Most of Vietnamese born Chinese came to Australia after the Communist government took over their homeland and expelled the ethnic Chinese. Many ethnic Chinese refugees were admitted to Australia through resettlement camps based in South East Asia.
- Since 1982, many Vietnamese people have arrived in Australia as migrants under the family reunion category and two-thirds of arrivals were women.

Demographics : Languages Spoken at Home by Chinese people

in the South Eastern Metropolitan area: ABS 2006

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Kingston	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
Total population of LGA	125,520	134,622	214,961	57,116
Number of residents speaking Cantonese	4,614	1,696	1,179	30
speaking Mandarin	2,870	1,556	1,954	44
speaking other Chinese languages	1,140	427	839	0
Total number of residents speaking a Chinese language	8,624	3,679	3,972	74
Number of residents 55 + yrs . speaking Cantonese	836	309	193	4
Speaking Mandarin	505	174	217	5
Speaking other Chinese languages	193	86	102	0
Total number 55 + yrs. speaking a Chinese language	1,534	569	512	9

Language:

- All Chinese languages use the same written characters for words of the same meaning, but are pronounced differently for different Chinese dialects. Hence, any dialect speakers literate in Chinese can understand each other through writing.
- There are 2 ways of writing in Chinese, old Traditional and new Simplified.

-for migrants from Mainland China

- Due to the vastness of China and its geographical barriers, China is composed of 56 ethnic groups with more than fifty different spoken languages. But despite this we still refer to the 'Chinese language', because Chinese people are part of the same cultural heritage.

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- The official language is Mandarin; other major dialects are Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkein, Teochew and Wu.
- The language spoken by the Chinese mainly depends on which part of China they, or their parents, originally came from.
- Simplified Chinese characters are often used by mainland Chinese immigrants. However, most printed materials in Australia are using traditional Chinese character.
- English proficiency is generally low, particularly among China born older women.

-for migrants from Hong Kong

- English and Mandarin are the official languages of Hong Kong.
- Most people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese since it is the main language used in education and government administration, as well as in daily social communication.
- Traditional Chinese characters are widely used in Hong Kong.

-for migrants from Malaysia

- Malaysian-born Chinese speak a variety of Chinese dialects and languages including Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew and Bahasa Malaysia.
- Simplified Chinese is commonly used in Malaysia in most official publications.

-for migrants from Singapore

- English is the main language of Singapore, followed by Mandarin. Other major spoken dialects are Cantonese, Hokkien, and Teochew.
- Singapore is the first foreign country to officially adopt Chinese Simplified characters in official publications.

-for migrants from Vietnam

- A large proportion of Vietnamese Chinese speak Cantonese as their mother tongue. Other major spoken dialects groups are Cantonese, Teochew and Hakka.

Religion:

- Chinese people may practice Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism or a mixture of these belief systems or Christianity.
- The practice of ancestor worship may remain in some Chinese families as an act to display filial piety and respect towards departed ancestors. Worshippers generally offer prayers with food and light incense and candles at their family shrines in their homes, which only family members are allowed to touch or clean.

Attitudes and Issues with Aging:

- Traditionally, elderly are cared for by their children and family at home as long as possible. Filial piety is important in the social attitudes of Chinese family.
- In the Chinese community, age is viewed positively and as a sign of wisdom. The elderly are respected for their enriched life experience and contribution toward the community.
- Generally, Chinese families prefer to seek assistance from their immediate family, followed by extended families, friends, bilingual workers or Chinese speaking GP. Most families rarely disclose their family issues to strangers as they fear “losing face” in their community if they accept external assistance to care for their ageing parents/grandparents.
- Most elderly prefer to live independently and may hesitate to ask for help. This can prevent them receiving needed help in a timely manner. When they can no longer cope with their circumstances and their situation has deteriorated significantly, they seek help.

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- Because of their inability to speak or read English, many older Chinese migrants have lost their independence. They rely on their children for information and also transport. Such barriers can limit their social interaction and may cause loneliness.
- The elderly often experience great difficulty with the first contact with a service provider and are rely heavily on their children to communicate with professionals to meet their needs.
- The Chinese community has been very proactive in establishing numerous Chinese senior clubs and Chinese specific services, in many areas, helping to reduce their social isolation.
- Due to breakdown of traditional family values and beliefs, some older Chinese may experience intergenerational conflict with their Australian-born grandchildren. Many grandchildren may not speak Chinese or follow traditional values of respect to elderly.
- By tradition, Chinese elderly prefer to live with their children, however more Chinese elderly now live alone and few of these expect to be looked after by their children in old age.
- Some elderly may not be well supported by their adult children. Some elderly care for their aged spouse without family help. Being unaware of the available aged care services, such elderly may continue their caring role with great hardship.
- Chinese elderly are more likely to receive aged care services if their children are engaged in the decision making process and they fully understand the nature of these services.
- There is generally a reluctance to accept mainstream residential aged care home because usually important cultural needs such as Chinese meals, communication in their languages and culturally appropriate activities are not provided.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Generally, the Chinese community regards disability as shameful and ill-fated. They are likely to encourage pity towards the person with the disability and their family.
- Many Chinese people tend to perceive mentally ill people with a strong cultural stigma and refrain from social interaction with the family. As a result, people may hesitate to discuss mental health issues with their health practitioner.
- According to traditional beliefs, some older people believe that disability or mental illness is punishment for bad deeds done in the past by the person or the family in a previous life.
- People may show greater discomfort towards people with mental illness or intellectual disability than towards a person with a physical disability.
- Parents may over-protect their child with a disability, keeping them at home, away from public attention. This could increase barriers to accessing appropriate services as they become socially isolated.
- Culturally appropriate education in Chinese language is recommended to promote better understanding of disability and mental illness, increase earlier uptake of treatment and to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

Customs / Values:

- Most Chinese values derive from Confucianism; some of the basic teachings being benevolence, propriety, righteousness, filial piety, loyalty, wisdom and consideration for others.
- Family life has always been extremely important to Chinese culture and viewed as the core unit followed by their extended family.
- Traditionally, the family structure is hierarchal and patriarchal, the eldest adult male being the primary decision-maker in family matters. The youth are expected to be respectful and loyal to their elders.
- Family honor is highly valued as family members, especially the younger generation are expected to "know their place" in society and to maintain a good reputation.

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- By tradition, females are responsible for housework and care for the children, however many young Chinese families are sharing household tasks and child rearing together.
- Education is highly valued by the Chinese family and the children are expected to work hard for great achievement in future.
- Chinese-born people place great emphasis on 'saving face', thus prefer to avoid public embarrassment or bring shame to the family.
- Chinese families tend to be private and reluctant to discuss family issues or conflict with non-family members to avoid embarrassment.
- Emotional self-control is essential to keep arguments or disagreements at minimum level.
- Chinese people, especially seniors prefer to show gratitude through practical gifts or food.
- Gender issues should be considered when offering personal care service, matching a client with a worker of same gender.

Communication styles:

- The oldest, most senior person or head of the family is always greeted before any others.
- It is taboo, for a younger person to refer to, or address a more senior family relation by his or her given name.
- Chinese people seldom display their emotions; kissing or embracing in public is considered inappropriate.
- Lack of eye contact, shyness and passivity are cultural norms and in some cases assertiveness may be interpreted as aggressiveness or hostility.
- Some Chinese people may avoid saying 'no' directly as a sign of respect. They may instead answer 'yes' to acknowledging that they are listening even though they may disagree with what is being said.
- Touching someone's head is offensive behaviour to Chinese elderly. Some other offensive gestures include pointing the index finger, (use open hand instead), using index finger to call someone and finger snapping.

Naming Conventions:

- Traditionally, a Chinese surname is placed first, followed by the person's given name, which may have one or two syllables.
- For "Tan Guo Jin," "Tan" is the surname, "Guo Jin " is the given name.
- Older Chinese people generally prefer to be addressed by their surname and appropriate title. For example, Mr Tan, Mrs Lee or Dr Chan. Unless you are invited by the Chinese person, avoid calling by their given names.
- Women traditionally retain their maiden names after marriage but may indicate marital status by using Mrs., Ms., Miss, or Madam. For example, Mrs. Tan might be married to Mr. Chong. However, some Chinese people may address themselves as 'Mrs. (husband's family name)', it is recommended to ask your female client for their preferred name at the beginning of the visit.
- Some Chinese people have adopted the Australian style of naming.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Chinese-born people consider health to be a state of harmony between forces of Yin (negative) and Yang (positive), and that illness is a result of disharmony or imbalance between these forces. The purpose of treatment interventions is to assist in restoring balance energy in order to create harmonious and healthy state.

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- Chinese people may use Chinese medicine for the purpose of balancing and complimenting biomedical practices.
- Some of the common traditional health practices include acupuncture, herbal medicine, dietary therapy, and qigong. Cupping is a remedy used for a range of ailments, mostly performed on the forehead, abdomen, base of the nose, between the eyes, neck, chest or back. This practice can result in bruises or marks, it is important not to mistake the resulting marks as a sign of abuse.
- Chinese people with a mental illness generally prefer to take less medication to avoid potential side effects. However, this may reduce treatment effectiveness and increase their chances of relapse.
- Some Chinese people may have the tendency to assume a passive sick role, relying heavily on other family members for their care needs.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Mandarin	Cantonese
Hello (How are you?)	Ni Hao Ma	Lay Ho Ma
Good Morning	Jao Shang Hao	Cho San
Good Afternoon	Wu Aan	Ng On
Yes	Shi	Hai/Ho (OK)
No	Bu Shi	Ng Hai/Ng Ho (Not OK)
Please	Qin	Chen
Sorry	Dui Bu Qi	Dui Ng G
Thank you	Shea Shea	Door Zey
Goodbye	Zai Jen	Zhoi King

Key Chinese Festivals / Significant Dates:

The traditional Chinese calendar was based on a lunar cycle-- that is, dates following the regular appearance of the full moon.

Timetable of Chinese Traditional Festivals (2010-2013)					
Year	Chinese New Year	Lantern Festival	Qingming Festival	Dragon Boat Festival	Mid-autumn Festival
	Fireworks after midnight, visiting family members and relatives.	Lantern parade and lion dance.	Visiting, cleaning, make offerings at ancestral gravesites.	Dragon boat racing, eat Zongzi (pyramid shaped glutinous rice dumplings wrapped in reed or bamboo leaves).	Eat moon cake, family reunion dinner.
2010	Feb. 14	Feb.28	Apr. 5	Jun. 16	Sept. 22
2011	Feb. 3	Feb. 17	Apr. 5	Jun. 6	Sept. 12
2012	Jan. 23	Feb. 6	Apr. 4	Jun. 23	Aug. 23
2013	Feb. 10	Feb. 24	Apr. 4	Jun. 12	Aug. 13

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

Organisation/Contact	Services/Activities
<p>Federation of Chinese Associations Main Office : Suite 6,Level 4, 20 Collins Street Melbourne, Vic 3000 Phone: 9650 6468</p> <p>Wednesdays am only: SER Migrant Resource Centre Level 1, 314 Thomas Street Dandenong. Vic 3175 Ph: 9706 8933</p> <p>Thursdays only: Springvale Community Aid and Advocacy Bureau (SCAAB) 5 Osborne Ave Springvale Vic 3171 Ph: 9546 5255 Contact Person: Junxi Su</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support (in Mandarin & Cantonese) <p>Case work Information, referral & advocacy Community Education Settlement-related issues for New Chinese</p>
<p>Central Bayside Community Health Centre</p> <p>335 Nepean Highway Parkdale 3195</p> <p>Contact: Manager of PAG Samantha O'Brian Ph: 9583 6970 Fax: 9585 4303 Coordinator: Anna Wang</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese PAG, Medium and Core needs <p>Weekly Tuesdays</p> <p>Venue: Clarinda Community Centre 58 Viney Street, Clarinda 3167</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston but neighbouring residents may be eligible</i></p>
<p>New Hope Foundation 40 Grattan Street Pahran, Vic, 3181 Phone: 9510 5877 Fax: 9510 8971</p> <p>Contact for PAG: Peter Kalathas. Contact for ESL: Warren Brewer Ph: 9510 5877</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese Specific PAG core Wed (karaoke, table tennis, chess & tai-chi) • Multicultural PAG • Seniors gym <p>Venue: Moorleigh Multicultural Centre Bignell Rd, East Bentleigh</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p>
<p>ADEC Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities</p> <p>175 Plenty Road Preston. 3072 Contact Wallace Leung Ph: 9480 1666 Fax: 9480 3444</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese Carer Support Group. <p>Service provided monthly from: Women's Health in the South East (WHISE), 15 Scott Street, Dandenong VIC 3175</p>

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<p>South East Region Migrant Resource Centre Level 1, 314 Thomas Street Dandenong, Vic, 3175 Phone: 9706 8933 Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural PAG core Monday Dandenong and Friday Doveton • Multicultural PAG high Tuesday Noble Park • Multicultural PAG core-high Wednesday Noble Park • Carer Support Program • Volunteer Visiting Program • ESL class for Chinese older people. • <i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i>
<p>Chinese Community Social Services Centre Inc.</p> <p>Burwood Office: 14 Livingstone Close, Burwood 3125 Phone: 9888 8671 / 9888 8493 Fax: 9888 8673</p> <p>Contact: Lydia Chan/Angela Ng Ph: 9888 8671</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese-specific PAG High Volunteer Co-ordination Program Venue: Mulgrave Community Centre 355 Wellington Road, Mulgrave <p>Hours of Operation: Fridays 9am – 3pm. Transport will be provided for eligible consumers.</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Cities of Monash & Greater Dandenong (Springvale)</i></p>
<p>ADEC Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities</p> <p>175 Plenty Road Preston. 3072</p> <p>Contact – Intake worker (for group that meets 3rd Thursday of the month in Mt Waverley)</p> <p>Contact – Jenny Fang (Thursday) (for group that meets 1st Friday of each month in Preston) Ph: 9480 1666 or 1800 626 078 or mentalhealth@adec.org.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese Mental Health Groups <p>The Mental Health Groups focus on support and education.</p> <p>Thursday group is for Mandarin/Cantonese speakers and Friday group is for Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese speakers.</p> <p>Family carers are welcome to attend together with care recipients.</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Whitehorse Community Health Centre</p> <p>43 Carrington Rd Box Hill, Vic 3128</p> <p>Contact - Canny Ying (Mon- Wed) Phone: 8843 2221 Message can be left in English / Mandarin / Cantonese.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cantonese – Mandarin Diabetes Information Sessions (Trial) <p>First session start in October, sessions are conducted in Cantonese and Mandarin. Minimal fee may be involved.</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Vision Australia 45 Princes Highway, Dandenong Ph: 9864 9533 CALD Telelink Contact 1300 847 466</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telelink Service For sighted and vision impaired people. Mandarin and Cantonese telelinks. • Free service.

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<p>Women’s Health in the South East, 15 Scott St, Dandenong 3175.</p> <p>Contact – Catherine Luk Ph: 0412 981638</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dandenong Panda Pals Playgroup <p>Wednesday, 10am to 11.30am for Chinese parents, grandparents and 0-4 years old children to participate in games. Free</p> <p>Venue: 9 Maralinga Avenue, Keysborough</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Yun Yang Buddhist Temple 6 Reservoir Road, Narre Warren North, Vic. 3805</p> <p>Phone: 9796 8079 Fax: 9796 9969 Email: yunyang@vicnet.net.au Website: info@yunyangtemple.org.au</p>	<p>This Temple provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhism classes • Excellent facilities for meditation • Spiritual and emotional support to the sick and elderly people • Religious services • Children development programs
<p>Senior Citizen Clubs</p>	
<p>Melbourne South Eastern Region Chinese Friendship Centre of Victoria (3 groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dandenong Senior Citizen Club, meets Fridays 10 Langhorne St, Dandenong. Fridays. Phone: 0425 712 214 • Springvale Community Centre, meets Thursdays. 1 Osborne Ave, Springvale. Phone: 8502 6493 • Hallam Recreation Centre (Casey Chinese Support Group) meets Tuesdays 118 Frawley Rd, Hallam. Phone: 9703 0268 	
<p>Springvale Mandarin Network Group, meets Thursdays Springvale Neighbourhood House, 46-50 Queen Street, Springvale. Phone: 9548 3972</p>	
<p>Springvale Ethnic Chinese Elderly Caring Friendship Association 2 Victoria Avenue, Springvale. Phone: 9546 8254 (Cantonese speaking)</p>	
<p>Ethnic Chinese Happy Age Association of Victoria Inc., meets Monday to Sunday 21 Lightwood Road, Springvale. Phone: 9547 9478</p>	
<p>Xin Jiang Chinese Senior Citizens Association, meets weekly Thursdays John Pandazopoulos Hall, 78 Power Road, Doveton. Contact 9798 3784 Mr Lie Sheng Tong. Mandarin speaking</p>	
<p>S.E.Chinese Seniors Citizens’ Association, meets Fridays John Pandazopoulos Hall, 78 Power Road, Doveton. Contact :9700 6165</p>	
<p>Kingston Chinese Senior Citizen Club, meets Friday Clarinda Community Centre, 58 Viney Street, Clarinda. Contact 8551 1200</p>	

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