

Greek Cultural Profile – older people

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Greek people 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.

The following profile has been created from the 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). Information about local relevant services & activities is also included.

Migration:

- The majority of Greek migration to Australia occurred in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.
- Most Greeks left their homeland for economic reasons, some for political reasons and others for educational opportunities. Many of those migrating were unskilled and had no knowledge of the English language. Many older Greek-born people have established their own small businesses.
- Second generation Greeks have much higher levels of education.

Local Demographics: Greek residents in the South East Region (ABS Census 2011)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
Total population of LGA	135,605	252,382	74,174
Total no. residents born in Greece	1,782	763	73
Total number of Greek speaking residents	3,813	2,315	174
Greek speaking residents, 55 years and over.	1,620	619	54

Language:

- Although there are some regional dialects, including Cypriot, Pontian and others, all Greeks speak or understand *standard Greek*.
- Greek children are encouraged to learn Greek as well as English. Most Greek Australian-born children are bilingual. The Greek community has the highest uptake of second and third generation language.
- Most Greeks living in Victoria, speak a language other than English, 34.6% assessed themselves as speaking English not well or not at all. (ABS 2011)

Religion:

- The majority of Greeks belong to the Greek Orthodox Christian Church. Most Greek celebrations and customs have their foundations in Greek Orthodoxy. Religion is a stronger influence with older Greeks than with the younger generation.
- Icons are significant religious symbols in Orthodoxy. Greek people pay honour to icons and usually have them in their homes. Icons and mirrors in the home are covered during the first few days of mourning as a sign of respect.
- Following a death, a 'kandili' (religious burner comprising oil, water and a floating wick) must remain lit for 40 days, next to an icon and a photo of the deceased until the soul leaves this world.

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- Fasting is an essential part of the Orthodox religion. Fasting from food means abstinence from meats, oil and dairy products. It is customary to fast 40 days prior to midnight on Easter Saturday. During the Lent/ Easter period Greeks spring-clean their homes and properties in preparation for the Holy Week.

Attitudes and Issues with Aging:

The Greece-born community reflected an ageing profile: 1.5% were aged 25 years and below; 5.4% were aged 26-44

years; 34.6% were aged 45-64 years; and 58.5% were aged 65 years and over.

- Traditionally the children and family members care for the elderly at home, where possible. However it is no longer customary for Greek families in Australia to live together as an extended family unit. Many elderly people live alone.
- Greek elders have a high status in the family and community and are treated with respect.
- Language and cultural differences may cause generational issues to arise between older Greeks and their Australian-born children and grandchildren.
- Grandparents often play an important role in caring for their grandchildren.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- The Greek-born community regards disability as shameful and a strong cultural stigma is attached to mental illness in particular.
- Older Greeks may be reluctant to access mental health services, as there is a general lack of understanding of mental health issues. 'Depression' is not understood to be a mental illness.

Customs / Values:

- A patriarchal social structure is the norm.
- Family relationships are very important to the Greek-born population. The family has a strong role in decision-making regarding the care of elderly people. Family honour is an extremely important cultural value.
- The wearing of black for those in mourning is still very prevalent, particularly by older women.
- Confidentiality is an important value.
- Personal relationships are important in terms of familiarity and trust of services and workers.

Communication Styles:

- Greek people generally have an expressive communication style and tend to express their emotions quite openly.
- Physical contact is both natural and normal but is generally restricted to the family / community.
- It is quite common for Greek people to greet each other with a hug and a kiss on both cheeks.
- It is important to maintain eye contact with someone who is older.
- Greek people are usually very sociable and generally prefer to be with others rather than be alone.

Naming Conventions:

- Older Greek people prefer to be addressed using their title. For example, Mr., Mrs. and Dr.
- In well-established or comfortable relationships, older Greek people may prefer to be addressed by their first name.
- Some Greeks will have anglicised versions of their Greek names.
- Older family friends are often addressed in conversation as 'Auntie' and 'Uncle' out of respect, even though they may not be directly related.

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Health Beliefs and Practices:

- In cases of terminal illness, there is a tendency to avoid telling the ill person that they are dying.
- A small number of older Greek-born people may still practice cupping. This produces round bruises. It is important not to mistake the resulting marks as a sign of abuse.
- Many older Greek-born people use methylated spirits as a remedy by rubbing their arms and legs when they are tired or sore.
- Greek Australians tend to seek out doctors who understand their language and culture.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Greek	Closest Pronunciation	English
Hello	χαίρέτέ	YIA-SAS OR HE-RE-TE	
Good Morning	καλήμέρα	KA-LI-ME-RA	
Good Afternoon	καλήσπέρα	KALISPE-RA	
Goodbye	gia sou	YIA-SOU	
Yes	ναι	NE	
No	όχι	O- HE	
Thankyou	ευχαριστώ	EF-HA-RIS-TO	

Key Greek Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Greece Independence Day *25th March*
- Ochi Day (1940 Greeks say 'No' to Hitler invading Greece) *28th October*
- St Basil's Day *1st January*
- Epiphany *6th January*
- Other religious observances are based around the Greek Orthodox calendar. These include Orthodox Easter and Christmas. Easter is the most significant celebration.
- Name days: The person who bears the name of a Saint celebrates their patron saint on that day

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

Contact	Activities
Australian Greek Welfare Society 7 Union St Brunswick. 3056 www.agws.com.au Contact for PAG: Ph: 93889998 Fax: 93889992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friendly Visiting Program ▪ Community Visitors Scheme ▪ South East Planned Activity Group Caters for Core, High & Dementia needs. Venue: Church Hall 100 Oaks Avenue, Clayton South, • Young people with disability Program • (Thurs & Friday) in Clayton <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>

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<p>Froniditha Care 94 Springs Road Clayton South VIC 3169</p> <p>Contact: Access and Support Worker Helen Tsaousis Phone: 9552 4127 Email: helen.tsaousis@froniditha.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteer Visiting ▪ Community Visitors Scheme ▪ HACC Access and Support ▪ Planned Activity Group Tues and Wed held in Huntingdale Mainly Core Needs clients ▪ Respite in the Home (Host Home) Thursdays Clients with early signs of Dementia/Low Care ▪ Residential Care ▪ Community Home Support Packages ▪ Brokerage service for HACC service <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre 39 Clow 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 • HACC Access and Support • Community Visitors Scheme <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Vision Australia 454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong Ph: 9864 9533 Contact for CALD Telelink Ph: 1300 847 466</p>	<p>Greek Telelink Program</p> <p>Open to all HACC clients, sighted & vision impaired Operates weekly, on Mondays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free
<p>Senior Citizens Clubs</p>	
<p>Greek Community of Springvale and Districts Senior Citizens Club Ph: 9548 1566 15 Warwick Ave Springvale</p>	
<p>Greek Senior Citizens Parish of St Athanasios, 2-4 Parsons Ave Springvale Ph: 9546 4118</p>	
<p>Greek Elderly Club of Dandenong & Districts, 17-19 Herbert St, Dandenong Ph: 9791 2180</p>	
<p>Berwick & District Greek Senior Citizen's Club, John Pandazopoulos Hall, Doveton Ph: 9512 4811</p>	
<p>Cranbourne/Hampton Park Greek Senior Citizen's Club, 1 Codrington St Cranbourne Ph: 599 82633</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.**