

Italian Cultural Profile – older people

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Italian 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 first arrival of Italians in Australia can be traced back to the 1850s during the gold rush.
- In 1885 a group of Italian migrants from northern Italy established a traditional Italian community called 'New Italy' in northern NSW.
- Post World War II, many Italians migrated to Australia due to economic and political upheaval.
- Most Italian migrants who came after World War II came from Sicily, Calabria and Veneto and settled in metropolitan areas.
- Victoria is home to the largest population of Italian-born people in Australia, with 76,904 people at the last census (2011). The median age of the Italian-born population is 68 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population.

Local Demographics: Italian residents in the South East Region (ABS 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 Italy	2,069	1,673	354
Total no. of Italian speaking residents	2,853	2,724	526
Italian born residents, 55+ yrs.	1,826	1,226	289
Italian speaking residents, 55+ yrs.	1,874	1,201	276

Language: (ABS Census 2011).

- Hundreds of dialects exist in Italy (for example Calabrese), however 'formal' Italian is recognised by the majority of Italians in Australia. Some older or uneducated migrants may not be able to speak standard Italian.
- 22.4% of the Italian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' or 'not at all'.

Religion:

- The Catholic Church plays a very important role within the Italian culture. 92.2% of Italian-born people in Victoria identify as being Catholic.
- Religion is a stronger influence with the elderly than the younger generation.

Attitudes and Issues with Aging:

- The Italian community is an aging population.
- Traditionally, the family is responsible for looking after older parents and relatives. Italians are reluctant to utilise services available for the elderly and nursing home admissions are low.

Italian Cultural Profile – older people

- Language and cultural differences may cause generational issues to arise between older Italians and their Australian-born children and grandchildren.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- In the Italian-born community people with a disability are rarely institutionalised.
- Mental illnesses tend to be stigmatised. Older Italian-born people are reluctant to access mental health services due to a lack of understanding of mental health issues.
- More often than not, Italian people with a disability and mental illness are cared for and protected by the family and community.

Customs / Values:

- Many expectations and obligations in the Italian community are based on sibling status and gender roles. This is also related to the general belief that it is necessary to 'do one's duty'.
- The extended family structure is the traditional norm.
- Children are highly valued in the Italian community and are incorporated into most family activities.
- Food plays an important part in the Italian culture.

Communication Styles:

- Italian-born people may display emotions openly, e.g. anger, despair and depression. Italians are generally highly expressive of joy, sadness and grief, both vocally and through body language.

Naming Conventions:

- It is conventional to use titles, particularly with older Italians. Second generation Italians may not follow this convention.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- There is no cultural objection to taking western medicines, although some older Italian-born people may supplement this with their own home remedies.
- Some traditional health beliefs may still be practised, i.e. belief in the 'evil eye', this is more prevalent for migrants from rural areas.
- Some older Italians may practice coining. This is used for a range of ailments and is usually performed on the forehead, the abdomen, on the base of the nose, between the eyes and on the 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.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Italian	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	Ciao / Salve	CHI-OW / SALVE
Goodbye	Arrivederci	ARRI-VA-DER-CHI
Yes	Sì	SEE
No	No	NO
Thankyou	Grazie	GRATSEE

Italian Cultural Profile – older people

Key Italian Festivals / Significant Days:

- Liberation Day *25th April*
- Republic / Constitution Day *2nd June*
- St Anthony of Padua *13th June*
- Festa del Redentore *3rd Sunday in July*
- Joust of the Quintana *1st Sunday in August*
- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary *15th August*
- Palio Del Golfo *2nd Sunday in August*
- St. Francis of Assisi *4th October*
- All Saints Day *1st November*
- Epiphany, Easter and Christmas are also celebrated.
- Many local towns also have a public holiday on the feast day of their patron saint.

Italian Cultural Profile – older people

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

Contact	Activities
CO.AS.IT 189 Faraday St. Carlton 3053 Ph: 9349 9000 Fax: 9349 1063 www.coasit.com.au	Friendly Visiting Program Community Visitors Scheme <i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong and Casey.</i>
Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Level 1 314 Thomas Street Dandenong 3175 Ph: 9767 1900 Fax: 9706 8830	<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 <i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i>
Vision Australia 454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong.3144 Ph: 9864 9533 Fax: 9864 9544 Contact for CALD Telelink Ph: 1300 847 466	Italian Telelink Program Open to all HACC clients, sighted & vision impaired Operates weekly Free

Senior Citizen Clubs

Italo-Spanish Senior Citizen's Club, Menzies Ave Hall, North Dandenong.	Ph: 9705 0914
Napoli Family Club, Menzies Avenue Hall, North Dandenong.	Ph: 9795 8130
Noble Park North Multicultural Elderly Citizen's Club, Jan Wilson Community Centre, Noble Park North.	Ph: 9774 7591
Cranbourne Italian Senior Citizens Club, Cranbourne Public Hall, Cranbourne.	Ph: 5995 5590
Corona Club – Italian Senior Citizen's Club, John Pandazopoulos Hall, Doveton.	Ph: 9700 7327

*** 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.**