

Polish Cultural Profile – older people

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Polish 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 relevant services & activities is also included.

Migration:

- The Polish have a long history of migration to Australia. The first wave of Polish refugees arrived in Australia post World War II. 65,000 Polish displaced persons migrated between 1947 and 1952. Many were employed on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in NSW.
- In the early 1980s a second wave of migrants arrived from Poland (The Solidarity Wave). The Government declared martial law due to demands for political reform from an independent trade union movement called Solidarity. During this period 15,000 new Polish migrants arrived. These migrants were different from the previous wave as they were mostly young, educated and married.

Local Demographics: Polish born 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. of residents born in Poland	865	1,277	106
Total no. of Polish speaking residents	954	1,522	106
Polish born residents, 55+ over yrs.	546	561	49
Polish speaking residents, 55+ over yrs.	498	529	41

Language:

- Many Polish elderly speak and understand English, but for some elderly this may be limited.
- Some Polish people may not read or write in English and therefore may have trouble filling in forms.
- Some Polish-born elderly have lost their ability to speak English due to dementia.

Religion:

- The majority of the Polish-born population in Victoria are Roman Catholics. (68.4% 2011 ABS)
- Polish born people are also Russian Orthodox, Lutherans, Adventists and Jewish.

Attitudes to / Issues with Aging:

- In Victoria, the Poland born community reflect an ageing profile, with 37.75% aged 65 years and over.
- Traditionally the elderly have been respected for their wisdom, although these values have begun to decline, through the influence of western European culture where youth is valued over age.
- Traditionally the role of the extended family in caring for the elderly is very important, however a large number of Polish-born people living in Victoria do not have extended family.
- There is often a moral obligation within the Polish community to support and care for the elderly within their own homes for as long as possible.
- Older Polish-born people may resist seeking assistance until a crisis point is reached, for fear of losing their independence.
- Polish grandparents often play an important role in caring for their grandchildren while their own children work.

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Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- There is a stigma attached to mental illness and physical disabilities.
- Some Polish-born people may look for a physical cause of disease before considering a mental illness. If mental health issues do exist, home visits are preferred instead of clinic visits.

Customs / Values:

- Traditionally the Polish community is patriarchal in social structure.
- Traditionally the extended family is the norm in the Polish community, although many older Polish-born people living in Australia do not have an extended family.
- Polish-born people tend to display grief openly.
- Punctuality is important to Polish people, being late is seen as a sign of bad manners.
- Polish people are practically minded, they do not like participating in activities just for the sake of killing time.

Communication Styles:

- Most Polish people are comfortable with directness, as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon rule of 'not asking personal questions'.
- Polish-born people have an expressive communications style, where emotions are displayed freely.
- Polish people may be quite formal with strangers, but touch as a form of caring is common among friends and family.
- Handshaking is considered polite in formal situations.
- Elders in the Polish community may have a high status, but may be reluctant to express their opinions.

Naming Conventions:

- It is important to use titles, particularly with older Polish-born people.
- Older Polish people do not like to be addressed as, 'You' or by their first name. They prefer to be addressed by their title and surname.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Traditionally doctors and other health professionals are well respected and given great authority.
- Polish-born people may use alternative therapies alongside mainstream medical treatment.
- Herbal medicines may be used.
- Polish-born people generally express pain openly.
- Preventative health actions may not be widely adopted by the Polish community.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Polish	Pronunciation
Hello	Cześć	CHESH
Good Morning	Dzień dobry	JEN DOBRY
Goodbye	Dowidzenia	DAW VEE-DZEN-YA
Yes	Tak	TAAK
No	nie	N-YEH
Thank you	Dziękuję	GEN-COO- YEAH

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Key Polish Festivals / Significant Dates:

- May Third Holiday (Commemorates the constitution of 1794) *3rd May*
- Independence Day (1918 Poland gained independence) *11th November*

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

<p>Polish Community Council of Victoria</p> <p>Level 3 Suite 305 3 Chester St Oakleigh.</p> <p>Phone: 9569 4020</p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Care Packages • Friendly Visiting Program • Carers group, meet bi monthly in Dandenong • Disability Support - Dandenong • Information and Referral <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Australian Multicultural Community Services</p> <p>Suite 111 44-56 Hampstead Road Maidstone Vic 3012</p> <p>Phone: 9689 9170 Fax: 9687 7446</p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Visitor Scheme • Friendly Visiting Program • Carer Support Group • HACC Access and Support • Emergency Relief Program • Information, Referral & Advocacy <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre</p> <p>39 Clow Street Dandenong, Vic, 3175 Phone: 9767 1900 Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polish PAG Dandenong – Tuesday • Polish Outing Group • 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 Fax: 9864 9210 Contact for CALD Telelink Ph: 1300 847 466</p>	<p>Polish Telelink Program</p> <p>Open to all HACC clients, sighted & vision impaired Operates fortnightly Free service</p>

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<p>Polish Seniors Club</p> <p>John Pandazopoulos Hall 78 Power Road Doveton , Vic, 3177 President: Grace Woltanski 9706 1490</p>	<p>This seniors group meets fortnightly at the John Pandazopoulos Hall in Doveton. Membership is not restricted to a local government area. Activities involve lunch, singing, dancing and outings.</p> <p>Interested people can contact Grace directly. She speaks Polish and English</p>
<p>Polish Senior Citizens Club in Rowville “Syrena”</p> <p>1325 Stud Road Rowville , Vic, 3178 President: Edward Bialy: 9700 1364</p>	<p>This seniors group meets fortnightly on Thursday and has over 200 members. Membership and attendance is open to all. Lunch is included.</p>
<p>Polish Grandmothers Group</p> <p>Contact Persons: Barbara Paplinska Ph: 9799 2837</p>	<p>Meet for friendship, learning & outings on last Thursday of the month – but often have outings more often, eg. go to theatre together.</p> <p>Venue: Wellsprings for Women 79 Langhorne St. Dandenong 3175</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.