

# Russian Cultural Profile- older people

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## Russian Cultural Profile

**PLEASE NOTE:** This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Russians 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 contribution of the Russian Welfare Society to this work.** Information was also gathered from *Cosmopolitan Melbourne* by J. Collins, L. Mondello, J. Beheney & T. Childs, 2001 and *Victorian Community Profiles 2001 Census: Russian Federation-born*, published by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, 2003.

### Introduction:

To understand Russian people, we must appreciate Russia's history and how it shaped their nation today. Russians effectively survived two revolutions (in 1905 and 1917), two World Wars and a Civil War (1918-1922). From 1922, the nation was known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), an official communist state until 1991. During the 1930's, millions died in the Great Purges. In 1989, the new generation of Soviet leaders headed by Mikhael Gorbachev led the Perestroika reforms. In 1991, USSR collapsed, ending the nuclear arms race and signaling the beginning of a new government. The Russian Federation, with Vladimir Putin as President, consists of fifteen independent nations, of which Russia is the largest.

### Migration:

There have been multiple waves of migration of Russian people to Australia, some being major waves other involving less people. In this local area, Russian residents have mainly come from China.

- ABS in 1901 recorded 3,358 Russian born people in Australia.
- In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, many opponents of the Tsar came to Australia, mostly via the Far East. A small portion of these people were Jews.
- After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, there was further emigration of people to Western Europe, China and Australia. This group brought the religious practices of the Russian Orthodox Church.
- An unprecedented level of migration occurred after World War 2 with Displaced Persons migrating from war torn Europe. In the early 1960s, as a result of the Cultural Revolution in China, many Russians came from China to Australia, with most who came to Melbourne settling in Dandenong and Geelong.
- The 1970's & 80's saw several thousand Jewish families migrate as a result of changed Soviet regulations.
- The 1990's saw another migration period at the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- Starting again in 1995, there were smaller numbers migrating through the skilled migrant program, family reunions and the spouse visa.

### Local Demographics: (ABS 2011)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
<b>Total population of LGA</b>	135,605	252,382	74,174
<b>Total no. of Russian speaking residents</b>	565	658	56
<b>Russian speaking residents, 55yrs and over</b>	230	144	11

- The Russian Federation born community in Victoria reflect an ageing profile, with 25.7% aged 65 years and over.
- In Victoria, the gender ratio is 64 males to 100 females, compared to 98 males to 100 females.

# Russian Cultural Profile- older people

---

## Language:

- Most of the Russian-born population in Australia speak a language other than English at home (86%) and 17.9 % assessed themselves as speaking English not well or not at all. (ABS 2011). Russian is the third most spoken European language in the world.

## Culture and Religion:

- Russian culture is firmly based in its religious traditions
- Russian Orthodox is the predominant religion. Far smaller numbers of Russian-born in Australia follow Islam, Judaism, Protestantism and Buddhism, while some arrivals, post 1991, have no affiliation.
- Religious icons are very important to many, with most families having a prayer corner in their living area.
- Art and literature were still very strong influences. ie: Tchaikovsky, Bol'shoy Ballet, Pushkin and Tolstoy
- During the Soviet regime, religion, art and literature were under strict control. Even so, Soviet artists made noteworthy achievements in film editing, music composition and Paternak and Solzhenistyn were Nobel Prizes recipients.
- The Russian family name (surname) is derived from the male's family. All Russians have a middle name which is the father's first name with an ending to denote they are a daughter or son of their father (patronymic). Generally the polite form of address is a person's first name and their patronymic.

## Attitudes to health and ageing:

- Older people have to deal with the loss of the possibility of being able to return 'home'.
- They have to accept that their family may be scattered all over the world and they don't know what may have happened to some members.
- Older people tend to fear the loss of independence and ability to make decisions which may come with ageing.
- They are stoic and independent and reluctant to ask for help.
- Although older people will tend to accept what life brings, they will fight it rather than resign themselves to it.
- There is a high incidence of mental illness, like depression and post traumatic stress, because of past experiences.

## Responding to professional care and services:

- Many elderly Russians tend to be suspicious of anything related to government.
- They will be very reluctant to provide information about themselves or their family in case it is used against them.
- Russians and their families' response to services like HACC are influenced by their place of origin.
- Russians mainly from rural China or smaller cities in Russia would be more resistant to ask for help. They may have large families and be resistant to ask for help because of existing family support received from children and grandchildren or other relatives. They may have little or no functional English at all so language can be a barrier.
- Russians mainly from former USSR, Western Europe, or from large cities in China are usually better educated, are skilled migrants and have a good knowledge of English language. They are more open to western culture and basic social and community services. They are more likely to appreciate the services being offered because of their exposure to community life and government services.
- Many Russians have a fear of going into hospital or Aged Care because they have a fear of being confined or trapped.
- Many older people are afraid of being in an English speaking environment and will usually be receptive to having an interpreter, especially if from same migration background.

## Russian Identity:

Even though people's experiences varied immensely depending on time and route of migration and whether they had an urban or rural lifestyle, their common identity as Russians is paramount. They have language, traditions, food and religion to unite them.

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### Greetings:

English Greeting	Russian Greeting	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	здрас-твуй-теа	zdras-tvuy-tea
Goodbye	да-ви-да-nya	das-vi-da-nya
Yes	да	da
No	нет	nyet
Thank you	спа-see-ба	spa-see-ba

### Key Festivals/Event Dates:

- New Years Day 1<sup>st</sup> January.
- Russian Orthodox Christmas 7<sup>th</sup> January
- Russian Orthodox New Year Eve 13<sup>th</sup> January.
- Russian National Women's Day 8<sup>th</sup> March .
- Russians celebrate Name Days (ie Patron Saints Days) in preference to Birthdays, however, many celebrate both.

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

<p><b>Russcare.</b></p> <p>13 Conway St Dandenong South 3175 Ph: 9793 5955 Fax: 9791 3933 Email: <a href="mailto:kronstadtgardens@russianwelfare.org.au">kronstadtgardens@russianwelfare.org.au</a> Website: <a href="http://www.russianwelfare.org.au">www.russianwelfare.org.au</a></p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Care packages</li> <li>• Two Telelink services twice</li> <li>• Russian Seniors Club meets weekly</li> <li>• HACC Outing Group</li> <li>• Russian Women's Craft Wednesday Group</li> <li>• Health info sessions</li> <li>• HACC Friendly Visiting</li> <li>• Transport Support – 3 buses available</li> <li>• Kronstadt Gardens – 86 bed aged care facility</li> <li>• Russian Village – an independent living complex</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>
<p><b>City of Casey</b></p> <p><b>Home and Community Care Services</b> 1/9 Regency Dr. Narre Warren. 3805</p> <p>Ph: 9705 5444 Fax: 8790 3754</p>	<p>HACC Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russian Outing Group</b> monthly, on a Thursday, for eligible HACC clients.</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Casey</i></p>

## Russian Cultural Profile- older people

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<p><b>Russian Ethnic Representative Council of Victoria</b>          118 Greeves St (PO Box 2811) Fitzroy 3065          Ph: 9415-6444. Fax: 9415-9866          www.nerc.org.au          Email: <a href="mailto:mail@nerc.org.au">mail@nerc.org.au</a></p>	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HACC Friendly Visiting program</li> <li>• Telelink program</li> <li>• Community Transport</li> <li>• Russian Migrants Club</li> <li>• Employment Program</li> <li>• Community and Cultural Festivals</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>
<p><b>Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre</b></p> <p>Level 1          39 Clow Street          Dandenong 3175          Ph: 9767 1900          Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural PAGs core and high</li> <li>• Positive Ageing Programs- strength training, warm water exercise and tai chi</li> <li>• Outing Groups</li> <li>• Carer Support Program</li> <li>• Volunteer Visiting Program</li> <li>• HACC Access and Support</li> <li>• Community Visitors Scheme</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>
<p><b>Vision Australia</b>          454 Glenferrie Road          Kooyong          Ph: 9864 9533          Fax: 9864 9544          Contact for CALD Telelink          Ph: 1300 847 466</p>	<p>Russian Telelink Program</p> <p>Open to all HACC clients, sighted &amp; vision impaired          Operates weekly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free</li> </ul>
<p><b>Russian Senior Citizen's Club</b>, Russian Orthodox Church Hall, Dandenong. No number available.</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.**