

Vietnamese Cultural Profile – older people

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Vietnamese 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 includes relevant services & activities for older people.

Introduction:

There are over 150,000 Vietnamese-born people living in Australia including people of Chinese (usually Cantonese) ancestry and ethnic Vietnamese as well as a number of smaller minority groups including the Khmer and Hmong. As a result there are many different cultural influences on people who were born in Vietnam.

Migration:

- There have been three main waves of migration to Australia. The first wave began in 1975 and comprised mainly of an educated and privileged sector. The next commenced in 1978 with the large-scale exodus of 'boat people' from Vietnam, initially arriving directly in Australia, but later via refugee camps in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Hong Kong.
- From 1992 onwards, family reunions resulted in a third wave of arrivals.
- At the 2011 census, there were 68,293 Vietnam born residents in Victoria and 17.2 % of these live in Greater Dandenong.

Local Demographics: Vietnamese 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 Vietnam	11,737	1,223	48
Total number of Vietnamese speaking residents	14,857	1,716	71
Number of Vietnamese born residents, 55 + yrs.	2,710	221	6
Number of Vietnamese speaking residents, 55+ yrs.	2,174	212	7

Language:

- The national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese.
- At the 2011 Census, 41.5% of the Vietnamese population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English not well or not at all.
- Depending on their ethnic background, Vietnamese-born people may speak Chinese (usually Cantonese), English, French and Khmer.

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Religion:

- In Victoria, 56.3% of Vietnam born people are Buddhists and 21.1 % are Catholics.
- Vietnamese also practice Taoism, Islam, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao and a certain percentage are Protestant.
- Vietnamese Buddhists may fast on specific days in the lunar calendar months. Catholic Vietnamese may fast on Good Friday and on Ash Wednesday.

Attitudes and Issues with Aging:

- Traditionally elderly parents are taken care of by the family.
- In Vietnam, elders were the leaders in families and had a strong influence in decision-making. In Australia the elders no longer have power, money or land, and become financially dependent on their children, creating a role reversal.
- Older Vietnamese people can become socially and culturally isolated from the younger generation.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Some Buddhist Vietnamese people may believe that they reap what they sow, or that disability is the result of misdeeds done in past lives.
- Traditionally, mental illness is a shameful thing within the Vietnamese culture. Mental illness is often feared or denied, and those who are ill are hidden away by their families until the family can no longer care for them.

Customs / Values:

- Respect for elders is an important cultural value. Insults to elders or ancestors are very serious and can often lead to severed social ties.
- In general, the Vietnamese culture values respect for authority and avoidance of conflict.
- The traditional Vietnamese family is patriarchal; the mother is considered the home minister (noi tuong) and is responsible for family harmony, the family budget and family schedules.
- In the Vietnamese community the benefit of the family and community comes before the individual.
- Vietnamese people tend to be polite, guarded and non-confrontational. Disagreement may be expressed in the form of non-compliance, or not answering a question.
- Modesty and privacy are important cultural values.

Communication Styles:

- To show respect, Vietnamese people bow their heads and don't look a superior or elder in the eye.
- Generally Vietnamese women do not shake hands with each other or with men. Many may greet by bowing slightly to each other.
- It is disrespectful to touch another person's head. Only an elder can touch the head of a child.
- Vietnamese people may say 'yes' to indicate that they are listening, this may not indicate that they agree. If a Vietnamese person does not understand something they may also smile or laugh to hide this and mask their embarrassment.
- Speaking in a loud tone with excessive gestures is generally considered rude.

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Naming Conventions:

- Vietnamese names are traditionally written with the surname first, followed by their middle name, with their given name last. Most names can be used for either gender.
- Vietnamese people prefer to be addressed, using their title. For example, Dr. Mr. and Mrs.
- Many Vietnamese people have also adopted western names.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Self-medication in the Vietnamese community is common.
- Many use traditional remedies in conjunction to western health care. Chinese medicines such as herbal remedies, tonics and massage are used. Acupuncture, pinching, pulling on the skin, rubbing oiled skin with the edge of a coin or spoon (cao gio), or cupping may also be used. These practices may result in bruises or marks.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Vietnamese	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	CHA `O Ô / Æ	CHJOW ONG / BAA
Yes	DA	ZAA
No	KNÔNG	KHYONG
Thank you	CÁM ON	KOME -EARN

Key Vietnamese Festivals / Significant Dates:

- Vietnamese follow the lunar calendar.
- Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Easter from Thursday to Saturday, concluding with a family gathering on Saturday night. Vietnamese Catholics celebrate Christmas with a family gathering after midnight Mass.
- Chinese (Lunar) New Year *1st day of the 1st Lunar Month (Jan/Feb)*
- Ancestor's Day (Full moon Festival) *April*
- Commemoration of the fall of Saigon *30th April*
- Doan Ngu *June*
- Wandering Souls Day *August*

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Services & activities useful for older Vietnamese people in Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.*

Organisation/Contact	Services/Activities
<p>Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA) 11 Morwell Pde Springvale 3171 Phone: 9547 6161 Fax: 9558 5742 Email: sicmaa.bh@bigpond.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and referral • ESL classes • Disability Access Project • Weekly seniors activity • Family Support • Domestic Violence information and referral • Gambling issues support • Carers monthly meeting • Happy ageing Program <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Uniting Agewell 1312 Heatherton Road, Noble Park, Victoria, 3174</p> <p>Ph: Respite Services Team: 9554 0700</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnamese Transit Club <p>Social program providing small group outings which include lunch. Clients need to be independently mobile and “low care”. Vietnamese and Chinese clients Mon - Thursday 9 am to 3 pm <i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong</i></p>
<p>Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre</p> <p>39 Clow street Dandenong, Vic, 3175 Phone: 9767 1900 Fax: 9706 8830</p> <p>www.smrc.org.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnamese PAG held in Springvale. • 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>Vietnamese Australian Senior Association VASA Vic Senior Citizen’s Centre 5 The Crescent Springvale. Contact Truyen Thai (President) Ph: 9547 9180 Ph: 0414 604 180</p>	<p>Members are mostly Vietnamese, some are members from Cambodia, Laos and Chinese.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesdays 10.00 am – 4.00 pm • Meetings, exercise, entertainment, outings, celebrations and meals.

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Vietnamese Freedom Club C/O Springvale Indo Chinese Mutual Assistance Association (SICMAA) Ph: 9547 6161	Meet at RSL Club 44- 50 Clow Street Dandenong Mondays, activities and meal.
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***This resource list showing services (other than core 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.**