

## Greek Cultural Profile – older people

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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 2006)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Kingston	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
<b>Total population of LGA</b>	125,520	134,622	214,961	57,116
<b>Total no. residents born in Greece</b>	1,966	3,048	788	54
<b>Total number of Greek speaking residents</b>	3,878	6,837	2,132	108
<b>Greek speaking residents, 55 years and over.</b>	1,533	2,545	516	24

### 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.
- 58.8% of Greek-born population in Victoria who speak a language other than English in the home assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' or 'well'. 65% of the Greek-born population in Victoria with low English proficiency are above 55 years of age (ABS Census 2001).

### 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:**

- 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 English Pronunciation
Hello	χάριτέ	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 *25<sup>th</sup> March*
- Ochi Day (1940 Greeks say 'No' to Hitler invading Greece) *28<sup>th</sup> October*
- St Basil's Day *1<sup>st</sup> January*
- Epiphany *6<sup>th</sup> 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.\***

<b>Contact</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<p><b>Australian Greek Welfare Society</b> 7 Union St Brunswick. 3056 www.agws.com.au Contact for PAG: Ph: 93889998 Fax: 93889992</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Friendly Visiting Program</li> <li>▪ AGWS South East Planned Activity Group Caters for Core, High &amp; Dementia needs. Venue: Church Hall 10 Oaks Avenue , Cnr of Beven &amp; Oaks Avenue, Clayton South, Every Thursday &amp; Friday Young people with disability. (Clayton) <i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Froniditha Care</b> 94 Springs Road Clayton South VIC 3169 Telephone: 9551 6556 or 9552 4100 Fax: 9552 4139</p> <p>Contact: Aged Care Coordinator Maria Mavridis. Phone: 9552 4111 Fax:9552 4194 Email: <a href="mailto:links@froniditha.org">links@froniditha.org</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fronditha Aged Residential Care Facility Clayton 104 residential care beds +1 Respite bed</li> <li>• Pronia Hostel, 40 beds (Ageing in Place)</li> <li>▪ Community Aged Care Packages</li> <li>▪ Brokerage service For whole range of HACC service</li> <li>▪ Planned Activity Group Tuesday &amp; Wednesday Mainly Core Needs clients</li> <li>▪ Respite in the Home (Host Home) Thursdays Clients with early signs of Dementia/Low Care</li> <li>▪ Volunteer Visiting</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>
<p><b>South East Region Migrant Resource Centre</b> Level 1 314 Thomas Street Dandenong 3175 Ph: 9706 8933 Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural PAG core Monday Dandenong and Friday Doveton</li> <li>• Multicultural PAG high Tuesday Noble Park</li> <li>• Multicultural PAG core-high Wednesday Noble Park</li> <li>• Carer Support Program</li> <li>• Volunteer Visiting Program</li> </ul> <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey &amp; Cardinia</i></p>

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<p><b>New Hope Foundation</b></p> <p>40 Grattan St Prahran 3181</p> <p>Contact for PAG: Peter Kalathas. Contact for ESL: Warren Brewer Ph: 9510 5877</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicultural Planned Activity Group, Monday High needs people</li> <li>• Multicultural Learning groups English classes Tuesday and Friday.</li> <li>• Seniors Gym.</li> </ul> <p>Venue: Moorleigh Multicultural Centre Bignell Rd, East Bentleigh Community Visitors Program</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p>
<p><b>Vision Australia</b></p> <p>454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong Ph: 9864 9533 Fax: 9864 9544 Contact for CALD Telelink Ph: 1300 847 466</p>	<p>Greek Telelink Program</p> <p>Open to <b>all HACC</b> clients, sighted &amp; vision impaired Operates weekly, on Mondays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free</li> </ul>
<p><b>Senior Citizens Clubs</b></p>	
<p>Greek Community of Springvale and Districts Senior Citizens Club 11-13 Warwick Ave Springvale</p>	<p>Ph: 9546 0713</p>
<p>Greek Senior Citizens Parish of St Athanasios, 2-4 Parsons Ave Springvale</p>	<p>Ph: 9546 4118</p>
<p>Greek Elderly Club of Dandenong &amp; Districts, 17-19 Herbert St, Dandenong</p>	<p>Ph: 9791 2180</p>
<p>Lemnian Community of Victoria, 906 Springvale Rd, Braeside.</p>	<p>Ph: 9504 2759</p>
<p>Australian Cyprian Sports &amp; Social Association- Senior Citizens Group Kingston Heath Reserve, Centre Dandenong Road, Cheltenham</p>	<p>Ph: 0438051177</p>
<p>Estia Greek Pensioners Association, 15a Portman St. Oakleigh</p>	<p>Ph: 9569 0937</p>
<p>Argos &amp; District Australian Greek Senior Citizen's Club of Kastoria, Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh</p>	<p>Ph: 9836 6159</p>
<p>Kondia Limnos Senior Citizens Club, Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh.</p>	<p>Ph:9852 0940</p>
<p>Greek Senior Citizens Club of Moorabbin, Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh</p>	<p>Ph:9555 1197</p>
<p>Greek Senior Citizens of Southern Eastern Regions &amp; Districts, Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh.</p>	<p>Ph: 0412 739 229</p>
<p>Greek Women's Senior Citizens Group of McKinnon "RHEA" Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh</p>	<p>Ph: 0412 339 681</p>
<p>Greek Elderly Citizens Clayton &amp; Districts, Clarinda Community Centre, Clarinda</p>	<p>Ph: 0438 300 107</p>
<p>Greek Seniors &amp; Pensioners of Clayton &amp; District, Clayton Hall, Clayton</p>	<p>Ph: 9544 6141</p>
<p>Greek Orthodox Community of Clayton, 10 Oakes Ave, Clayton South</p>	<p>Ph: 0412 345 223</p>
<p>Independent Hellenic Senior Citizens Association of Clayton Clayton Hall , Clayton</p>	<p>Ph: 9547 3565</p>
<p>Senior Citizens Group of the Greek Orthodox Parish of The Three Hierarch's. 42-44 Knight St. Clayton</p>	<p>Ph: 9544 5706</p>
<p>Australian Greek Elderly Citizens Club of Mentone &amp; Districts, 56 The Corso, Parkdale</p>	<p>Ph: 9583 6096</p>
<p>Berwick &amp; District Greek Senior Citizen's Club, John Pandazopoulos Hall, Doveton</p>	<p>Ph: 9512 4811</p>
<p>Cranbourne/Hampton Park Greek Senior Citizen's Club, 1 Codrington St Cranbourne</p>	<p>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 Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia. Some services and activities listed are in fact available to residents beyond these four municipalities.**