

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 90,788 people at the last census. The median age of the Italian-born population is 61 years compared to 36 years for the total Victorian population.

Local Demographics: Italian residents in the South East Region (ABS 2006)

	City of Greater Dandenong	City of Kingston	City of Casey	Cardinia Shire
Total population of LGA	125,520	134,622	214,961	57,116
Total no. residents born in Italy	2,346	1,738	1,659	336
Total no. of Italian speaking residents	3,332	2,722	2,732	490
Italian born residents, 55+ yrs.	1,940	1,328	1,043	254
Italian speaking residents, 55+ yrs.	2,009	1,355	1,013	248

Language: (ABS Census 2001).

- 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.
- 21.7% of the Italian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 2.3% spoke English 'not at all'. 71.8% of the Italian-born population in Victoria with low English proficiency were over the age of 65.
- 27.5% of the Italian-born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 32.4% as 'well'

Religion:

- The Catholic Church plays a very important role within the Italian culture. 93.7% of Italian-born people in Victoria identify as being Catholic.
- Religion is a stronger influence with the elderly than the younger generation.

Italian Cultural Profile – older people

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.
- 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 Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.*

Contact	Activities
<p>CO.AS.IT</p> <p>189 Faraday St. Carlton 3053 Ph: 9349 9000 Fax: 9349 1063</p> <p>Contact for Telelink: Ph: 9457 4430 www.coasit.com.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian Planned Activity Group Range of Needs, inc. Dementia Venue: Fronditha, 94 Springs Rd. Clayton South <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Telelink Programs <i>Eligibility: Melbourne wide</i>
<p>South East Region Migrant Centre</p> <p>Level 1 314 Thomas Street Dandenong 3175 Ph: 9706 8933 Fax: 9706 8830</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural PAG core Monday Dandenong and Friday Doveton • Multicultural PAG high Tuesday Noble Park • Multicultural PAG core-high Wednesday Noble Park • Carer Support Program • Volunteer Visiting Program <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>New Hope Foundation</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"> • Multicultural Planned Activity Group (includes Italian clients) • Multicultural English Classes(Tues & Fri) • Seniors Gym <p>Venue: Moorleigh Multicultural Centre Bignell Rd, East Bentleigh</p> <p>Community Visitors Program</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p>
<p>Central Bayside Community Health Centre</p> <p>335 Nepean Hwy Parkdale. 3195 Contact: Travis Jenkins/Sandra Rumble Ph: 9583 6970</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian Adult Day Activity Group (Wednesday) Self Help Older Women's Group <p>Venue: Central Bayside Comm. Health Centre, 31 Venice St. Mentone</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p>
<p>Vision Australia</p> <p>454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong.3144 Ph: 9864 9533 Fax: 9864 9544 Contact for CALD Telelink Ph: 1300 847 466</p>	<p>Italian Telelink Program</p> <p>Open to all HACC clients, sighted & vision impaired Operates weekly Free</p>

Italian Cultural Profile – older people

Casey/Cardinia Library Cranbourne Branch Ph: 5990 0150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,000 Steps Program in Italian <p><i>Eligibility: Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
---	---

Senior Citizen Clubs	
Circolo Pensionati Italiani di Bentleigh , 2 Arthur St, Bentleigh.	Ph: 9578 1766
Circolo Pensionati Freccia Azzurra Club, 784 - 796 Springvale Rd, Braeside.	Ph: 0408 173 272
Circolo Pensionati Italiani di Oakleigh East Clayton Club, Clayton Hall, Clayton.	Ph:9543 1951
Avellino Circolo Penzioners di Springvale, 25 James St. Clayton.	Ph: 9543 4864
Circolo Pensionati Campani Italiano di Clayton, Clayton Hall, Clayton.	Ph: 9544 5604
Regione Lazio Senior Citizen's Club, Clayton Hall. Clayton.	Ph: 9547 3095
Associazione Pensionati Laziali di Monash, Fregon Hall, Clayton	Ph: 0423430140
Catanzaro Senior Citizen's Club, Community Inn Hall, Clayton.	Ph: 0416085978
Italian Senior Citizen's Group of Moorabbin, Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh.	Ph: 9557 5133
Italian Pensioners of Kingston, Moorleigh Centre, East Bentleigh.	Ph: 9579 3080
Senior Citizen's Group of Heatherton, 30-36 Ross St. Heatherton.	Ph: 0406 522 681
Circolo Pensionati Italiani di Mordiallic, Allan Mclean Hall, Mordiallic	Ph: 9587 3612
Circolo Pensionati 'Don Bosco', Oakleigh Youth Club, Oakleigh.	Ph: 9569 9064
Italo-Spanish Senior Citizen's Club, Menzies Ave Hall, North Dandenong.	Ph: 9700 3406
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: 9547 4048
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 Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia. Some services and activities listed are in fact available to residents beyond these four municipalities.**