

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 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. of residents born in Poland	1,039	613	1,312	76
Total no. of Polish speaking residents	1,191	672	1,563	76
Polish born residents, 55+ over yrs.	491	274	420	31
Polish speaking residents, 55+ over yrs.	474	226	380	30

Language:

- The main languages spoken at home by the Polish-born population in Australia are: Polish (70.9%), English (22.3%), and German (1.3%) (ABS Census 2001).
- 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.
- Polish born people are also Russian Orthodox, Lutherans, Adventists and Jewish.

Attitudes to / Issues with Aging:

- 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.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- There is a stigma attached to mental illness and physical disabilities.

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- 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

Key Polish Festivals / Significant Dates:

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

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

<p>Australian Polish Community Services</p> <p>Suite 111 44-56 Hampstead Road Maidstone Vic 3012</p> <p>Phone: 9689 9170 Fax: 9687 7446</p> <p>Fortnightly a worker is in attendance at the Polish Senior Citizen's Club in Rowville.</p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Visitor Scheme • Carer Support Group • HACC Equity & Access Project Worker • Community Partners Program • Emergency Relief Program • Polish Older Person's Outreach Program • Information, Referral & Advocacy <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>Polish Community Council of Victoria</p> <p>Level 2, 43-51 Queen Street Melbourne, Vic, 3000 Phone: 9629 8277 Fax: 9629 8377</p> <p><u>South East Office</u> Dandenong CAB Office 186 Foster Street East Dandenong Vic 3175 Ph: 0438 347 136</p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAG in Oakleigh (Thursday) and Rowville (Sunday) • Community Aged Care Packages • Social Support Program <p>South East Region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and Referral Every 2nd Tuesday 9.30 to 4.30pm. <p><i>Eligibility: Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Casey & Cardinia</i></p>
<p>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</p> <p>Level 1, 314 Thomas Street Dandenong, Vic, 3175 Phone: 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 Street Prahran, Vic, 3181 Phone: 9510 5877 Fax: 9510 8971</p> <p>Contact for PAG: Peter Kalathas. Contact for ESL: Warren Brewer Ph: 9510 5877</p>	<p>Services provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural PAG Mon • Multicultural English classes Tues & Fri (Learning Group) Seniors Gym <p>Venue: Moorleigh Multicultural Centre Bignell Rd, East Bentleigh</p> <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</i></p> <p>Community Visitors Program</p>

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<p>Baptcare/Southaven Day Centre (Community Aged Care)</p> <p>Southaven House 117 Jasper Road, Bentleigh</p> <p>Ph: 9557 8322 Fax: 9557 9876</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Day Activities. Monday - Saturday • Overnight Respite & Employed Career Respite. • High Level Dementia needs- Monday • Mixed Groups – Tuesday - Friday • Polish Language Support every day. <p><i>Eligibility: Kingston</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>
<p>Polish Seniors Club</p> <p>John Pandazopoulos Hall 78 Power Road Doveton, Vic, 3177</p> <p>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</p> <p>President: Eugeniusz Kosenko 9791 7270</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>Interested people can contact Eugeniusz Kosenko directly. He speaks Polish and English.</p>
<p>Polish Grandmothers Group</p> <p>Contact Persons: Barbara Paplinska Ph: 9799 2837 Krystyna Marcinkowska Ph: 9551 1262</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>
<p>Polish Seniors Citizen Club in Moorabbin</p> <p>2 Arthur Street Bentleigh, Vic, 2034</p> <p>President: Mr Boleslaw Sojka 9578 6024</p>	<p>This seniors group meets weekly on Wednesday at the Bentleigh Senior Citizens Centre. Membership and attendance is open to all. Snacks are included.</p> <p>Interested people can contact Mr Sojka directly. He speaks Polish and English.</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.